

A CASE STUDY OF OPERATION CAST LEAD: UNDERSTANDING  
ISRAELI CHOSEN TRAUMA TO EXPLAIN THE PRINCIPLE OF  
PROPORTIONALITY EMPLOYED IN THE INTERVENTION

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to all those persons working behind the scenes who face seemingly insurmountable barriers for the betterment of this world and whose every little step made forward towards such endeavor produces the sound of perseverance that unlimitedly reverberates incomparably more than any war drums ever will.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Before Common Era .....	BCE
Discourse Analysis.....	DA
Defense Minister.....	DM
Foreign Minister.....	FM
Israeli Air Force .....	IAF
Israeli Defense Force .....	IDF
International Humanitarian Law .....	IHL
Large Group .....	LG
Ministry of Foreign Affairs.....	MFA
Non-Governmental Organization.....	NGO
Operation Cast Lead .....	OCL
Prime Minister .....	PM
Universal Declaration on Human Rights .....	UDHR
United Nations .....	UN
United Nations Security Council .....	UNSC
World War Two .....	WW II

## **ABSTRACT**

**A CASE STUDY OF OPERATION CAST LEAD: UNDERSTANDING ISRAELI CHOSEN TRAUMA TO EXPLAIN THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPORTIONALITY EMPLOYED IN THE INTERVENTION.**

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This dissertation investigates the relationship between the application of proportionality employed in the December 27, 2008 – January 18, 2009 Israeli military intervention known as Operation Cast Lead, carried out in Gaza, and the large-group psycho-political concept known as chosen trauma. Thus this study probes the effect the latter concept played in the outcome of proportionality used by the Israeli military in Gaza against Hamas. The first chapter in this study will supply the general tenets with which the rest of the study shall deal. This will include definitions of proportionality in international humanitarian law, large-group psychology and chosen trauma. Furthermore this introduction shall also give the reader the motivation for carrying it out, aim of the study, postulation of hypotheses and initial research question. The research question revolves around the premise of ascertaining what role historical anxieties have had in modulating the application of proportionality employed by Israel. The second chapter will deal with

the methodological aspects of the study, in which a thorough discussion of discourse analysis, the reasons for choosing such methodology and its merits and limitations will be tackled. Chapter three consists of the literature review which will primarily deal with building a consistent argument in support of the initial research query. This will start by giving a detailed background of the theoretical framework. Moreover aspects of the damage procured to Gazan infrastructure and civilians will be discussed and tied to Israeli perceptions of threat during the military intervention, with existing empirical and statistical research. Moreover the next chapter will be the actual discursive analysis and discussion of a number of texts sourced from the website of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Relations, after which the last section shall qualify the nature of the results obtained from the analysis.

Key words: Proportionality, chosen trauma, identity, Israel, Hamas, Gaza.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDY**

### **1.1 General Introduction**

Since the end of World War II to the turn of the 21st century, there have been at least 130 wars globally. These conflicts collectively have caused the deaths of more than 23 million people as a consequence of direct violence. Another 20 million have perished through other war related plights such as famine, disease and other disruptions attributable to conflict. Renner & Patterson (1997) argue that the amount of the most prominent wars which resulted in the killing of at least 1000 persons was at around a dozen at any given year during the 1950s. Moreover between the 1960s and 1970s this figure rose no higher than about twenty a year but around the beginning of the 1980s this surged to more than thirty and according to Renner & Patterson (1997) it has remained as such ever since.

Such violent conflicts are usually interpreted in terms of relative material power, relative deprivations, resources or structural challengers within societies. However from the point of view of belligerents certain aspects of conflict revolve around national honor, redemption of incurred past trauma or even sublimated revenge. Thus the central focus of the current study shall be an assessment of the role of emotional mechanisms involved in

political decision making since it is deemed by this researcher that the imperviousness of some long-standing conflicts, such as the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, to resolution is located in human psychology more than in realpolitik concerns.

During this evolution of conflicts the world has undergone a transformation of conflict that went through the cold war and beyond the fall of the Iron Curtain. In this time period a major transition in the fabric of war occurred that has led the traditional notion of war between sovereign states to be supplanted by a new modality of conflict, fighting within societies. In such manner Renner & Patterson (1997) argue that armed conflict began conforming less and less with the preoccupation with fending off foreign invasion which is the concern of traditional national security doctrine, to guarding a given society from threats arising from within. In consequence this dynamic has created a shift in the traditional image of war that moved away from the predominant notion of war as being one involving national armies engaged in formal combat on a well-defined battlefield. Increasingly modern violent conflict, involves belligerents within rather than between countries, with the added dimension of ethnicity. Thus such ethnic conflicts and hostilities do not occur between sovereign states but within them and in consequence foreign policy and traditional diplomacy have less effect on their outcomes. In such conflicts the battlefield can be anywhere and the distinction between combatants and noncombatants has become progressively blurred, as in the case of the military action chosen for this study.

The case study around which this research will revolve, namely the 2009 Gaza war also known as Operation Cast Lead (OCL), falls more or less in the category of conflicts just described, however the particular conditions of this conflict shall be delved in later on in this study. From the title of the current research one can easily denote that one of the main focuses shall be to closely examine the psycho-political phenomenon of “large group” identity known as chosen trauma in relation to OCL, with particular focus on the Israeli side of the conflict. Chosen trauma as group dynamic was first coined and discussed in academic circles by Vamik Volkan. This author defines the term chosen trauma as the way in which to describe the collective memory of a calamity that once befell a group’s predecessors. This author asserts that chosen trauma is more than a simple recollection; it is a shared mental representation of an event or events, which includes realistic information, fantasized expectations, intense feelings, and defenses against unacceptable thoughts. In this current study such theoretical perspective shall be applied to the Israeli position on proportionality in relation to the December 27, 2008 – January 18, 2009 military intervention ordered by the Israeli government and carried out by its military forces in Gaza. This will be carried out in the third chapter by first documenting the proportionality issues concerning OCL and then by illustrating recent studies of Israeli group perspectives and comparing these to theoretical aspects.

## **1.2 Operation Cast Lead, Context and Military Action**

According to B'Tselem (Israeli Human Rights organization), on the morning of 27 December 2008, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) targeted dozens of strategically important buildings and sites in the Gaza Strip. This was followed by the second stage of the operation on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 2009 when IDF ground forces entered the Gaza Strip, taking control over parts of it. On January 18, Israel implemented a unilateral cease-fire, and on the subsequent day, Hamas followed suit (B'Tselem, 2009). The purpose of the current study is not concerned with military strategic tactics, however a certain amount of the military maneuvering and choices taken by the Israeli side has to be dealt with in order to attain a better grasp of the theoretical aspects that shall be delved in later in this research. Such closer look at the military features of Operation Cast Lead that have aroused international clamor shall be given in the initial chapters of this study. This will be done in order to frame the intervention in terms of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) so that later on in this study these notions can be contrasted using the theory of chosen trauma to further build a solid argument. This theory shall be briefly expounded in the current section shortly after giving a definition of proportionality in IHL.

Nonetheless the central theme of the current research was raised by Erakat (2009) when asserting that the 2008 Israeli incursion in Gaza violated fundamental provisions of international humanitarian law. Notably among these Erakat (2009) mentions “the prohibition on direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects (the principle of distinction),



the prohibition on indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks, and the prohibition on collective punishment.” Many similar arguments have been brought to the fore after OCL, and this is what has prompted the current researcher to analytically probe the issue in order to assess what other processes could have been operating that led to the aforementioned accusations of disproportionate conduct in warfare.

### **1.3 Proportionality in International Humanitarian Law**

Operation Cast Lead gave rise to numerous questions regarding the applicability and contents of IHL and therefore a certain modicum of background knowledge is needed to understand the context of this specific case. IHL is the branch of international law instituted in order to limit the exercise of violence during armed conflict, directed towards combatants and civilians. This has originated over the centuries from the practices of armies on all continents and has gradually acquired formal expression through a body of legal texts that apply internationally. Sassòli, Bouvier, Olson, Duplic & Milner (1999) state that IHL has evolved significantly over the last decades through improvements in both treaty law and customary international law. Furthermore Sassòli et al. (1999) illustrate that the central principles of IHL include those of necessity, humanity, distinction, the proscription on causing unnecessary suffering and that of proportionality, with which this research will be primarily concerned.

Further importance of the principle of proportionality in the law of war has been recognized by the United Nations (UN), for instance in the UN Charter that was adopted after World War II. Article 51 of the UN Charter states that:

“Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.”

Therefore under this article any act of aggression is prohibited unless in the special circumstance of self-defense. Furthermore another important element in International Law is Protocol I of the Geneva Convention of 1949 that also condemns the infliction of excessive suffering during the course of a war (Gardam, 2004). Thus the concept of proportionality in IHL is not a new one at all and neither is it a feature whose principles are distinctively debated in some peculiar manner only in relation to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Henceforth the next part of this chapter shall convey an insight of what a large group (LG) is, of which Israel is an example and it is through psychological processes at this level through which aspects such as proportionality in warfare, have their origin.

## **1.4 What is Large Group Psychology?**

Usually when one refers to psychological concepts, these are often thought of as existing exclusively on the personal level or at most in the interactions among individuals and under determinate interpersonal contexts. This view of psychology often overlooks the larger social context in which such interaction occurs. Volkan's theories have more bearing in this latter context of psychology and as such a brief introduction to large group (LG) psychology is required before delving deeper into the theoretical aspects of chosen trauma. The aforementioned focus on the individual existing as a separate entity from the larger social context is especially prevalent among western nations, where individuality, independence and uniqueness are perceived as desirable personal attributes.

These are encouraged and are understood as a need for individual differentiation from the family unit in the process of becoming a mature adult. Nonetheless according to Weinberg & Weishut (2012) in the Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Group Psychotherapy (2012), this notion is an illusory one and only helps to maintain the fallacious self-evidence of the individual's separation from his/her broader socio-historic context of which the individual is actually a product. In this view individuality is just one way in which to deconstruct reality. According to Hofstede (2001), cultures existing in Africa, Asia, the Arabic and Latin worlds, give greater value to collectivism where in reality one cannot decouple the individual from the social context.

Weinberg (2007) argues that the psychological activity that occurs within a group amount to more than a simple addition of the psyche of its members and is more akin to a matrix of unconscious connections between the members of a group. In consequence the individual learns how to civilize his or her own behaviors through group interaction and moreover how to restrain certain impulses. Through this process the power of the social forces acting upon and through the individual to shape behavior, is amplified and the psyche's makeup becomes alterable. "Experiencing the LG is experiencing oneself as part of a social matrix, as belonging to some connecting web that exists all around us but is usually invisible in ordinary day life. In the small group, we sense existence and impact of the group as a whole and experience "the group mind," which is a dynamic product of the interaction of the group members," (Weinberg & Weishut, 2012). Weinberg (2007) argues that if one starts with the supposition that groups have a common unconscious (that was originally purported by Jung), which is made up of fantasies, beliefs, anxieties and memories that are able to exhibit collective defense mechanisms, one should also consider this dynamic as a characteristic possessed also by higher social structures, such as communities and even societies. Weinberg (2007) clarifies that such notion does not mean that large groups such as societies behave like small groups, but that if group unconscious is discernable in small collectives of individuals, a higher order of unconscious mechanisms is also inferable in large groups, existing as the social unconscious. As held by Jung (1981) with regards to the individual unconscious, the social unconscious also exists abstractly out of space and in a timeless psychological dimension. Weinberg (2007) argues that due to this timelessness, members that belong to

a particular group are able to relive and reenact in their present, relationships and emotions from the past of the group. Correspondingly, members of social groups could be said to unconsciously relive and reenact in the present emotions related to past events of their society.

Therefore in such a view each individual Israeli emerging from every new generation would be socialized and inculcated with the psychological and cultural subtexts of the group identity individually. Since this identity is shared by a multiplicity of similarly socialized individual actors, their unconscious mechanisms would function in synchrony, thus giving rise to the psychological phenomenon of the LG unconscious. Volkan (2006) after extensive research in the area of LGs concludes that in defining the concept of LG identity is to recognize a “sense of sameness shared by thousands or millions of people”. Thus it is this sense of sameness that which explains what people mean when they say, “we are Maltese,” “we are Palestinian,” or “We are Jews.”

Authors such as Hopper (2001) and Dalal (1998) adamantly criticize the use of the term ‘group mind’ because it carries with it the connotation of an existing physical group body. To this effect the comment purported by Knassus (2006) in such regard ought to be the frame through which the reader is to view the notion of large group unconscious in the current study: “there is no such thing as ‘the group unconscious’, the ‘social unconscious’ or a ‘collective, cultural unconscious’. Instead, each individual’s unconscious is groupal.” For instance in the light of such concept the third chapter will in

part serve the purpose to empirically ground Israeli group perceptions with regards to OCL and the Arab/Israeli conflict in general, so that specific aspects that demarcate chosen trauma may be looked for in the official public statements.

## **1.5 What is Chosen Trauma?**

The aforementioned concepts and other relevant psycho-dynamic processes shall be explored in further detail in subsequent chapters and applied to the subject of the current case study during the analysis of data. Now that a basic understanding of the subject matter has been conveyed one can take a step further and identify the main theoretical lens through which the case study of this research will be viewed. According to Klain & Pavic (2002), the word trauma is derived from Greek where it signifies “piercing of the skin, or breaking the bodily envelope”. Thus in physical medicine, it denotes damage to tissue. Freud used this term metaphorically in order to emphasize the fact that the mind can similarly be wounded by events, thus portraying the mind as being enveloped by a sort of skin or defensive shield (Klain & Pavic, 2002). Incidentally Volkan when speaking of LG identity refers to it as a sort of second skin or “tent canvas”, which generally stays in the background but with which LG members become greatly concerned when it is attacked.

Weinberg and Weishut, (2012) hold that one may become especially aware of the social unconscious and its manifestations in a LG within traumatized societies as its

presence becomes more prevalent. In this manner particular psychological developments of national, ethnic or religious groups are influenced as shared representation or multiple ones, of historical events and the transgenerational transmissions of their ancestors' trauma. This is precisely what Volkan (1988) identifies and expounds as chosen trauma and glory, that is a process by which a group tends to choose and identify with certain past triumphs or glories and/or traumas. Volkan (1988) asserts that this process induces an accentuated sense of "weness" within a particular group. Thus chosen glories consist of the shared mental representations of a large group's ancestors' past triumphs, the heroes and martyrs associated with them. In this manner the Maccabean revolt (167–160 BCE) in Jewish traditional culture, constitutes an instance of chosen glory for Jewish people around the word and is reenacted in the collective memory through the celebration of Hanukkah. Nonetheless Volkan (1997) asserts that the effects of chosen traumas are more far reaching than chosen glories since these often involve experience of extreme violence, humiliation and inability to mourn losses adequately. In this regard Volkan (1997) points out that present-day Israelis and Jewish people have inherited a legacy to "never forget," and such traumatizing events as the Holocaust, linked to previous incidents of Jewish persecution and anti-Semitic sentiments, have created in Jewish and Israeli consciousness the sense of having a special, precarious fate and a shared identity, even for those far removed from traditional Jewish culture.

Thus Volkan (1988) asserts that a chosen trauma is the shared mental representation of a massive instance of distress suffered by that group's ancestors.

Therefore under certain circumstances a LG regresses when feelings of insecurity or threat become pervasive. In consequence the group's chosen trauma may become reactivated by either the leadership to raise support for the set agendas or by persistent ideas within the population that in turn require the leadership's adequate defense of the group's threatened identity. Volkan (1988) argues that collective memory of past traumatic disasters may potentially become the paradigm that maintains the existential threat in the national memory and as a result wards off any potential for complacency. This may be also understood as collective mourning or grieving that is never properly externalized in order to make it possible for the group to move on. Grieving in psychology is understood as an individual process with a universal goal; i.e. the fundamental examination of the meaning of life and that of its end. Based on Volkan's notions Weinberg & Weishut, (2012) state that: "memories, perceptions, expectations, wishes, fears, and other emotions related to shared images of the historical catastrophe and the defenses against them, may become an important identity marker of the affected LG and actually construct its social unconscious."

According to Volkan (1997) transgenerational transmissions of specific traumas are not simply the result of handing down stories about a humiliating calamity from one generation to the next. Volkan (1997) asserts that patterns of behavior (in this case the military force employed in Gaza) and nonverbal messages are intuited and acted upon accordingly. Moreover Avruch (1998), argues that in cases of high-contrast conflictual interactions, such as that between the Israelis and the less militarily endowed Palestinians



in Gaza, “what is in the explicit message is rarely the entire story; much is implied and indirect and is to be found, in the receiver and the setting.” Thus eliciting this implied subtext in Israeli public discourse during OCL is another part of the scope for this research. Moreover Volkan (1997) asserts that transmissions of traumatized self-images occur almost as if psychological DNA were planted in the personality of the new generation through its relationships with the previous one. The transmitted psychological DNA affects both individual identity and later adult behavior. Nonetheless Volkan (1997) also argues that it is important to keep in mind that what is transmitted may also change as it passes from one generation to the next.

## **1.6 Aims of Research**

As Bar-Tal (1998) argues, intractable conflicts have serious implications for the global community and understanding their dynamics is a special challenge for social scientists. Thus the main aim of this study will be trying to determine whether the public discourse during OCL displays aspects of unwarranted Israeli intransigence and enmification through Volkan’s theory of chosen trauma which may have shaped the proportionality applied in OCL. Furthermore proof of the previous statement will be attempted to be ascertained by carefully investigating official Israeli communiqués, statements and interviews (available on the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Relation’s website) using a suitable methodology (discourse analysis). The following are the textual documents that shall be analyzed and later on discussed:

- 1 - December 27, 2008. PM Olmert press briefing on the IDF operation in Gaza
- 2 - December 28, 2008. President Shimon Peres on IDF operation in Gaza
- 3 - December 28, 2008. Briefing to the Diplomatic Corps by FM Tzipi Livni
- 4 - December 28, 2008. Letter from Israel Ambassador Leshno-Yaar to UN
- 5 - December 29, 2008. Address to Knesset by FM Livni on Gaza operation
- 6 - December 31, 2008. Interview with Gen Michael Herzog, chief of staff to DM Barak
- 7 - December 31, 2008. FM Livni press conference on IDF operation in Gaza
- 8 - January 1, 2009. PM Ehud Olmert in Beersheba
- 9 - January 3, 2009. Statement by DM Ehud Barak
- 10 - January 4, 2009. Interview with FM Livni
- 11 - January 7, 2009. PM Olmert's reaction to UNSC Resolution 1860
- 12 - January 17, 2009. Statement by PM Ehud Olmert

In consequence another central aim is to try elucidate whether the proportionality principle employed by Israeli military forces conforms with psychological mechanisms expected by the concepts entailed by the theoretical framework of chosen trauma. Backing theoretical and legalistic arguments as well as a number of relevant secondary sources will consequently be employed in the initial sections of the research, and applied to this specific case study, in order to have a solid base on which to structure the methodological framework. Therefore the intended objective of this study revolves around the determination or otherwise that the claims made against Israeli forces by human rights organizations and other independent entities, “of resorting to excessive force, and of using improper weapons in urban warfare, thereby endangering the lives of innocent civilians” (Cohen, 2009), and thus of disproportionate conduct in warfare, could be founded in chosen trauma and as such these concepts may be elicited from Israeli discourse regarding OCL by utilizing the appropriate qualitative methodology. The details and explanation for adopting discourse analysis as methodological tool shall be given in the next chapter of this study.

Now, whereas there appears to be copious amounts of literature in relation to Operation Cast Lead's unfoldment, legal implications and aftermath, there seems to be very few existing specifically addressing large group identity and chosen trauma in relation to this specific conflict. Thus the motivation for choosing to investigate this specific area of study was to help fill the deficit existing within academic literature. Consequently the objective and scope of the current research is deemed to be a relevant one both for the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution and also for direct contextual relevance to Mediterranean security. Conflicts are a natural intergroup interaction, however when conflicts become as violent as OCL in the larger context of the intractable conflict, special attention should be given since such conflicts have a determinative effect not only on the wellbeing of the societies involved but also affect deeply the security and welfare of other nations and the region in which they occur (Bar-Tal, 2010). In fact Calleya (2012) deems the ongoing Israeli/Palestinian conflict as being one of the main sources of instability both in the regional context of the Mashreq and on the international arena. Furthermore the project is also pertinent to the prospect of shedding more light on the role of psycho-social factors in intractable conflicts (see also Bar-Tal, 2007) by using as case study the latest major intervention in Gaza.

Thus the arguments that will be expounded in the third chapter of the study will include ones that explicate how siege mentality emerged through trauma. An example of such arguments is put forward by Avruch (1998) when stating that the "Israeli obsession with security and uncertainty, as well as some undergirding metaphors that some Israelis

live by: the Holocaust, Masada, the nuclear arsenal as their “Samson-option” are deeply embedded in the Israeli psychology and grounds for retaliation. However in order to build a solid argument in support of the research’s hypotheses, a succinct but clear historical context will have to be iterated focusing mainly on the case study but also referring to salient historical events that add depth to the scope of the study.

Before moving to the final parts of this introduction one ought to clarify any misconception with regard to the scope of this research. It should be stated that no interest on the part of the current researcher subsists in trying to morally justify or be apologetic of actions carried out by either side of the conflict parties. Moreover it is neither the intention of the current researcher to take appropriation of any of the socio-psychological theories that shall be delved in later sections.

## **1.7 Research Problem**

One of the human features that is often underestimated in terms of how people are shaped is the ways in which early experiences of joy or trauma directly effect the way the human brain is wired. Furthermore in order to probe one's propensity to violence nowadays analysts often try to examine early childhood experiences in order to assess whether there exists a correlation of the former with current behavioral patterns. The current researcher holds that the same theoretical application can be transposed onto the behavioral patterns of large groups and more specifically states. Freud (1975) explains

that group psychology is concerned with the individual man as a member of a race, of a nation, of a caste, of a profession, of an institution, or as a component part of a crowd of people who have been organized into a group at some particular time for some definite purpose. On such lines Freud (1975) also purports that individual psychology and group or social psychology, are essentially inextricable and in fact individuals are molded psychologically through social interaction in their group of origin. According to Freud the pleasure principle is what drives the ego to seek instant gratification and constantly avoid pain. When this notion is applied to Volkan's theory of chosen trauma one may infer that in analogy group psychology works on similar mechanisms. Furthermore when the psychology of a whole group has experienced extremely painful traumas, these become etched indelibly into the identity of such group. Adamant avoidance of this pain or the repetition of it (even as mental representation) may become the primary concern and thus lead a group to engage in drastic behaviors (Volkan, 1997). These may be perceived as being disproportional from the outside when one does not take into consideration the deeper motivations for such actions.

Thus the core problem around which the current investigation shall revolve is availed by the extremely asymmetric nature of the military confrontation in OCL. Israel is not a country lacking military prowess, on the contrary it is one of the most technologically and strategically advanced countries in the region. These factors are the direct results of Israel's circumstances at the time of its founding in 1948. According to Grossbard (2003) this nation was born in immense denial and repression of feelings of

helplessness and humiliation, all of which render group psychological development problematic. However as stated by Avruch (1998), it is only by “careful attention to the Israeli context to an understanding of history, symbolism, and psycho-cultural dynamics that we get a real sense of what “security” means to Israelis.” Israeli preoccupation with security is associated to a number of interrelated schemas about the world that in effect enable Israelis to deal both with persistent situations and as well as with unexpected ones. Avruch (1998) further argues that for some Israelis, typically the Orthodox, “schemas may derive from a Judaic tradition that preaches “a people who dwells alone in the world” surrounded by implacably hostile nations. For other Israelis, schemas derive from Zionist interpretations of such historical events as Masada or Tel Hai, while for many others, “it is the European Holocaust that searingly defines the costs of inattention to national security” (Avruch, 1998).

Grossbard (2003) asserts that the impetus for the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel has its foundation in emotion rather than rational forces. This author argues that it would have been more logical to have gone to the United States or other countries, as the majority of Jews did, instead of going to a land that was already populated by Arabs and required to be built from scratch. Theodor Herzl, who is considered to be the father of modern Zionism, stated that “if you will it, it is not a dream” and Grossbard (2003) interprets this omnipotent statement as being consonant with denial of impotent feelings of weakness, helplessness and anxiety. Volkan (1997) asserts that Israel is a “synthetic country”, that is some identity markers are not shared by

all citizens, however a central claim of the current study will be that painful memories do in fact subsist in as an important marker, especially in time of open conflict. Such feelings had their origin in the long years of the Jewish exile, which according to Grossbard (2003) reflect the same manner in which a child may develop with defense mechanisms such as denial and repression. In psychological terms the greater the feeling of imperviousness the greater the underlying anxieties and fears are. Moreover Grossbard (2003) articulates that these cycles of psychological mechanisms result in resistance to acknowledge the existence and suffering of the 'other':

“Thus our state was founded with a lot of joy and fanfare, with euphoria in the victory of the War of Independence, and a lot of trepidation inside. It is no accident that our developmental process as a nation reborn in its land is identical to the development of a child from infancy to maturity. *During his growth, the child gradually gives up his omnipotence, through stages of despair and depression, and increasingly recognizes the Other.* We too increasingly recognize the Palestinians as well as our own ethnic and national complexity, that we cannot vanquish terrorism and have to give up territory. We are learning this just like a child, with a lot of pain and disappointment. How many more disappointments does this child need in order to grow up and realize his true ability, to give up his magnanimous fantasies, and still recognize the existence of the Other?”

Clark (2011) contends that the Holocaust serves as the dominant event within Israeli cultural identity and initially was the foundational narrative that prompted the necessity for a secure nation for all Jews. According to Clark (2011) this entailed a strong military force that renders a repeating of the foundational trauma impossible. Moreover Clark (2011) posits that every new instance of threat to Israel and its people's security revives the old trauma/s. Hence self-preservation from this perspective can be viewed as

an indicator of national trauma and in consequence these earlier traumas become redeemed in the fight for statehood. Furthermore Clark (2011) asserts that this effort is especially embodied in the Zionist narrative that becomes more prominent when terrorism and security threat subsist. Hence rocket fire coming from Gaza into the surrounding Southern Israeli communities, acted as an exacerbating factor for the traumatized security need. From the standpoint of Holocaust trauma and Israel's group identity, the rocket barrages had to be stopped in order to avert another instance of Jewish victimization. Therefore from this perspective the fact that the incoming rockets were rarely successful is of no consequence, since even if only a few were, such events effectively deny the existing feeling of security and revokes the sense of trauma. Clark (2011) argues that as such from the perspective of an identity that is rooted in defending the state against the recurrence of previous traumatic events, rocket barrages constitute a serious menace that warrants an appropriate response.

Maalouf (2001) asserts that belonging to any particular affiliation, be it ethnic, religious, national or anything else does not predispose anyone to violence. However Maalouf (2001) goes on to state that one ought to only review events of the last few years to see that any human community that feels humiliated or fears for its existence and thus lives in extreme anxiety, will tend to behave in exceptionally violent ways when under attack. Such perspective shall be employed to attempt to demonstrate that the former duress and hardships endured by Jews throughout history have manifested into the tenacity of self-preservation at all costs and aversion to casualties displayed by modern



day Israelis. This is precisely what the research problem of the current study will deal with in relation to OCL.

## **1.8 Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this research is that through the careful investigation of the data sample that will be extracted directly from the website of the Israeli Foreign Relations Ministry, it will be possible to determine the extent of chosen trauma narrative in public discourse (or lack there of) that was used during the course of the OCL military incursion in Gaza and in relation to the proportionality principle employed by Israeli forces. The current researcher holds that the aforementioned narratives of chosen trauma will be discerned from the data sample, however explicit chosen trauma triggering is not expected during the course of the actual offensive. These shall probably be found with consistent representation within the general Israeli public, which will be probed in the third chapter. According to Volkan (2006) “if the leadership does not provide a kind of reality testing that includes an understanding of the enemy’s (as large group) “psychic reality” and does not show some attempts to respond to it in humane ways, dangers become magnified and regression sets in or is maintained.”

Thus it is deemed possible to assess whether proportionality justification subsisted as an existing intrinsic cultural preoccupation owed to Jewish trauma and previous aggression on Israel predominantly extant among Israelis as LG, that was reflected in

Israeli public discourse. Conversely the investigation will also try to determine if on the other hand such aspects of Israeli anxiety towards being under attack was instrumentalized in this discourse for the political reason of justifying the proportionality of OCL. This will be done by trying to find instances; that justify the outbreak of the conflict and the course of its development, portrayal of positive images of Israeli conduct, delegitimization of the opponent and self-representation of Israeli society as the victim of Hamas and Palestinian hostile action. Therefore proof and indication of such views shall be sought for to conclude whether these were formed over a long period of violence as a result of the society's sufferings and losses in the form of chosen trauma or whether such anxieties experienced collectively within Israeli society are being reinforced through public discourse.

## **1.9 Explanation of how the Study Will Develop**

The next chapter shall expound the methodology employed in the study. This chapter will thus include a discussion of discourse analysis and its entailed advantages and disadvantages. However prior such discussion a brief explanation for the choice of the methodological approach and the world view perspective it stems from will be given. Moreover the manner in which the methodological tool was applied, its validity and reliability, limitations encountered and ethical considerations will be presented.

Chapter three will serve to empirically ground the aims and purposes of the research. However the initial part of this chapter will be dedicated to further elucidate the theoretical aspects through which this study shall be observed. Further more construction of identity and the psychological mechanisms of nations will be briefly delved in, after which a deeper theoretical perspective shall be supplied. Attention shall be given to relevantly tie such arguments with the tenets of the study. Moreover an in-depth investigation of existing studies and literature that bestow empirical clout to the aims of the research shall be propounded. This part will also include relevant data pertaining to the sort of military actions undertaken by the Israeli military in OCL, which have been scrutinized by the international community and contributed to put the Israeli principle of proportionality into question.

Thus in order to do so, reliable sources such as reports issued by the UN and independent human rights organizations which investigate the damage sustained by Gaza, will be consulted. This will serve the purpose to illustrate clearly the reasons why the aforementioned question of Israeli proportionality came to the fore in the first place. Consequently several studies that target Israeli perceptions of threat, security and other similar concepts, around the time just prior to and during OCL shall be iterated. These studies mainly consist of quantitative survey based researches that question representative portions of the Israeli population on diverse matters. Some of these are concerned with the population's perceptions of the broader conflict such as a study carried out by Nets-Zehngut and Bar-Tal (2011), while other studies by Yaar and Hermann (2008 and 2009)

directly probe popular perception with regards to OCL. Furthermore material by Ben Meir (2009) that illustrates statistical data about Israeli public support for the war in question will be iterated to further support the claims of the current study. All the while such prior studies will be put through the lens of the theoretical framework. Moreover chapter four will deal directly with the actual analysis of the texts indicated earlier. In this chapter a detailed investigation and discussion of these texts shall be given in chronological order, depending on the date of issuance of the text. Here each discourse will be analyzed by applying the criteria which will be discussed later in chapter three, in order to verify or disprove the claim set by the initial research query. Finally the last chapter will consist of a discussion of findings and the conclusions drawn from the results obtained from the analysis.

## **CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The importance of methodology lies in the fact that a research is in part judged upon the soundness of the methodology employed to carry out the research. In this respect Curwin & Slater (2008) argue that the more convincing a methodology the more likely it is that the conclusions drawn from a particular study become accepted. For such reason choosing a suitable methodological procedure may not be that straightforward. Consequently such choice has to be made prior to carrying out the research, in a manner that fits the requirements of the study.

In the current section a reflection upon the methodological aspects of the study shall be supplied by giving a thorough explanation about its merits vis a vis other methodologies. Moreover both advantages and disadvantages shall be expounded to make the actual discussion of analysis more clear. As stated in the first chapter, this study's aim is to analyze the rhetoric contained in official statements, interviews and communiqués of Israeli public officials issued during OCL, for the purpose of validating or disproving the stated hypotheses. The current researcher opted to use a purely qualitative approach, namely discourse analysis (DA), since it was deemed the best suited

methodological approach to tackle the aim of the current research question within the time allotment given to carry out the study and because of the restrictions and lack of depth that is often associated with quantitative research. Nonetheless in order to counter the disadvantages ascribed to qualitative methods, the next chapter shall include a number of quantitative studies in order to back the arguments of this research. The next parts in this section will further explain the nature of discursive analysis and how this was applied to this study and the reasons why it was chosen.

## **2.2 World View**

As a starting point for the methodology that was selected for this research, it seems relevant to give the reader the world view perspective that was employed. This will mainly revolve around the tenets of social constructivism, which according to Agius (cited in Collins, 2010) emerged as an analytical approach during the late 1980s as a prominent means to explore international politics and international relations. This mainly originated as a challenge to the more traditional approaches of realism, liberalism and neo-liberalism that focus on material forces as a means to understand and theorize upon world functions. Volkan (1997) also contends that in analyzing ethnic conflict only through alliances, opportunities, economics, military strength, or other real-world factors, the rational and traditional are overemphasized. To this effect Volkan (1997) asserts that this is not to say that political leaders do not consider the psychological or emotional implications of actions and statements, but they typically focus more on the domain of

spin doctors that seek to manipulate or modify outcomes to gain concrete and calculated results.

On the other hand according to Agius (cited in Collins, 2010), constructivism holds that concepts such as security and its related threats are socially constructed and thus focuses on the importance of social relations, norms, culture and identity. An example of social relation in this view is thus the appropriateness of use of force or proportionality. In this view “ideational as well as material factors construct the world around us and the meanings we give to it,” thus the human world is one of artifice where ideas are central and not simply a given or “brute fact”. This is as such the first ontological premise in this approach. Agius (cited in Collins, 2010) states that since the world is social, as opposed to being purely material, the constructivist approach thus contextualizes such beliefs, actions and interests the actors hold and recognizes that the world they dwell in is created by them and impacts on them.

Its second principle is that identity matters, since actors are impelled to act through identity and it is identity that explains the behavior of actors. Thus enmity is a social relation and not a material one. Hence by studying how interests develop, constructivists argue that one obtains a clearer picture of identity and relations as social interaction. Conteh-Morgan (2004) also adds that shared ideas and interests are shaped by historical circumstances, so that the norms that define reality to a group or individual may change significantly over time. Lastly according to Agius (cited in Collins, 2010), this

analytical perspective maintains that the relationship between the actors and their surrounding structures mutually shape each other. According to Conteh-Morgan (2004), issues of cooperation or conflict are determined by socially constructed understandings among and within groups, nations and the international system. This sort of feedback is what Wendt (1992) means when stating that “anarchy is what states make of it,” so that features such as the international anarchic system, the monetary system and power relations are constructs that states and individuals buy into. Therefore as Avruch (2012) asserts, such constructs are liable to become unstable, inconstant, and negotiable. Through such lens meaning and understanding are proposed to be the product or constructed by the actors and actions, as such the Israeli intervention in Gaza may be perceived as disproportional or even irrational by those outside the Israeli structure of meaning.

## **2.3 What is Discourse?**

“Discourse, in general terms, refers to actual practices of talking and writing. Our use of the term is somewhat more specific: We define a discourse as an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, that brings an object into being. For example, the collection of texts of various kinds that make up the discourse of psychiatry brought the idea of an unconscious into existence in the 19th century. In other words, social reality is produced and made real through discourses, and social interactions can-not be fully understood without reference to the discourses that give them meaning. As discourse analysts, then, our task is to explore the relationship between discourse and reality.” (Hardy and Phillips, 2002).



Discourse has also been defined as any practice by which individuals perform the act of imbuing meaning onto reality (Ruiz, 2009). According to Hardy & Phillips (2002), understanding, interpreting and sifting through discourse entails inquiring into “the power of the often incomplete, ambiguous and contradictory” narratives that however produce what we experience as a real and solid social reality. Anything that is part of and makes up the social world, as well as identities themselves, is the progeny of discourse. Hardy & Phillips (2002) posit that “our talk and what we are, are one and the same.” Hence these authors assert that without discourse, social reality is an impossibility. Likewise in order to comprehend one’s experiences, reality and ultimately oneself, one has to first comprehend the discourse. Moreover this recognition about the centrality of the role of discourse in every-day life is merely the tip of the iceberg in terms of constructivism. Hardy & Phillips (2002) emphasize that the process of social construction that forms organization and social life can be uncovered through analyzing discourse.

## **2.4 Discourse Analysis**

To specify discourse analysis as a research method in the traditional sense is difficult, if not impossible according to Nikander (2008, cited in Holstein & Gubrium). Instead discourse analysis is often described as a methodology in its own right or as a theoretical perspective rather than a method or research tool (Hardy and Phillips, 2002). While other qualitative methods avail a researcher with the tried and tested tools for understanding social life and the meanings it has for individuals in it, DA “goes one step

further in embracing a strong constructivist epistemology” (Hardy & Phillips, 2002). Such epistemology entails an origin and direction or scope of knowledge through social construction that can be investigated in discourses. Moreover Paltridge (2012) describes DA as a methodology that focuses on knowledge about language beyond the word, cause, phrase and sentence that is needed for successful communication. Therefore it looks at patterns of language across texts and considers the relationships between language, social and cultural contexts in which it is used. Paltridge (2012) also argues that DA considers that the use of language presents different views of the world and thus diverse understandings, as it examines how the use of language is influenced by relationships between participants. Such relationships include for example that between heads of state or public officials and the populations that look up to them as in the case of the current study. One should also mention the effects the use of language has upon social identities and relations. According to Paltridge (2012) DA investigates how views of the world and identities are constructed through the use of discourse.

## **2.5 Common Themes within Discourse Analysis**

The primary theme is the practice of giving attention to spoken material and discourse within a vast number of contexts and texts as the topic and thus the focus is given to studying how language is used. According to Nikander (2008), DA investigates the nature of “social action by dealing with how actions and/or meanings are constructed in and through text and talk,” independently of which form it might take. Consequently

the practice of DA entails looking for patterns or a specific order in the way talk or texts are organized. Nikander (2008) also adds that the practitioner needs to look for “how intersubjective understanding, social life and a variety of institutional practices are accomplished, constructed and reproduced in the process.” Such methodology thus probes for example, the manner by which individuals make sense of their own identity or how does collective and large group identity originate in discourse and therefore how these are managed and maintained in speech and text. Another important stratum of DA “focuses on the construction of psychological categories in interaction” Nikander (2008). This layer of analysis is of particular importance for the current research since its analytic part will mostly deal with how to make sense of and interpret references to specific human emotions and recollections during interaction such as violent conflict. Thus determining what kind of psychological categories emerge from certain societal functions, in this case public discourse, and how these are represented is central to the aims of this study.

Consequently DA fits perfectly the study of the transcribed materials that will be used in the current research. According to Austin (1962), “people do things with words,” therefore a direction for action taken is entailed. Nikander (2008) argues that such orientations contained in the discourse “account for, explain, blame, make excuses, construct facts, use cultural categories, and present themselves to others in specific ways taking the interpretive context into account”. Hence a discourse analysis’ aim is to try identify intermittent linguistic and discursive patterns employed within the same talk or

speech, but also across different data sets. Nikander (2008) argues that finding internal psychological traits that lies ‘behind’ and explain talk or text is beyond the scope of DA. For such reason the current study will focus on highlighting markers of psychological dynamics. This will be done by categorizing certain traits and trying to spot patterns in the discourse that conform or resonate with what Volkan’s theories predict while at the same time assessing how this informs Israeli public discourse with regards to the perception of proportionality. The purpose of such methodological procedure is to explicate the questions and dynamics that arise from people intent into active sense making of reality. Consequently within this methodological framework, the task at hand in the current research would be to establish, based on the data sets chosen, whether characteristics of chosen trauma apply to the case study being investigated. In the context of public and official speech or talk, this often contains a prevalence of discourse that is carefully crafted in order to fit a particular context.

Nikander (2008) suggests that if the researcher aims to become skilled in the practice of DA one ought to become adept in “making the familiar strange and taking a step back from the taken for granted nature of language.” Such approach entails the development of a “constructionist analytic eye and ear, an appreciation of the detailed artfulness of text, talk and interaction. In other words the task of the discourse analyst is to study “how people do the transparently obvious” (Nikander, 2008). Moreover Nikander (2008) argues that another common theme in DA practice is a particular interest or focus on the psychology of discourse, therefore on the persuasiveness, organization of

rhetoric and moral consequence embedded in certain aspects of the language being used. Often it is expected that such speeches and texts to be rife with mutually contrasting positions and arguments. In consequence this notion entails that such discursive content can be analyzed in terms of how it is oriented and by paying attention to culturally available opposing positions in an argument, such as how is the concept of proportionality being presented in the data sets picked for this case study in relation to urban warfare and how such feature could be downplayed by other preoccupations that might be evidenced in the discourse.

## **2.6 Discourse Analysis in Practice**

DA was deemed to be the most fitting analytical methodology to carry out this study for reasons close to what Nikander (2008) expounds when addressing the constructivist epistemology. According to this author this methodology leads the researcher towards a defined interpretative direction with regards to the data being studied. Nikander (2008) further posits that since the establishment of academic branches devoted to systemic study of interaction and discursive functions of language, it has been noted that the use of symbolic expression such as speech or text, have at their core active construction of particular meanings and characteristics. Nonetheless despite the specificity of certain types of discourse has been established, DA does not restrict the researcher to apply any particular formalized methodology, structured procedure or calculation. Furthermore the theoretical perspective of social constructivism does not

direct the application of DA in any inflexible manner. According to Nikander (2008), for instance the best way to grasp the analytical skillfulness afforded by DA and thus become more adept in crafting a good analysis, is learning through example and practice.

Moreover the collection of required data to be used in DA, needs to be followed by an extensive period of time during which the analyst is required to immerse him/herself in the material that has to be carefully sampled to meet the relevance required for the purposes of the study. Consequently regarding the sampling strategy that was adopted for the current study, it simply consisted of reviewing 30 official Israeli statements issued during OCL, out of which twelve were chosen for analysis. The modality for choosing these was determined by who promulgated the discourse and the variety of themes encompassed in these that were deemed pertinent to the study. At this point in this phase of the research, Nikander (2008) states that it is vital to become appropriately familiarized with the data through systematic reading and rereading in order to start noting patterns, similarities, peculiarities, language use, associations and so on. The current study deals with readily transcribed texts sourced from a pertinent official outlet (i.e. the website for the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Relations). Such textual materials were then required to be filtered according to the criteria set by the research interest propounded in the preliminary analytic interests and initial analytic query. However as it has been the case, further refinement and specificity of the questions was gradually done while refining and developing the text analysis system, that has been kept flexible. This was done to follow the recommendation given by Nikander (2008),

where this author suggests that coming up with appropriate organizing principles for the material that is to be analysed discursively is vital in order to transform the practice of DA into a craft skill. However since practical procedural guiding principles are impractical to come by in DA as opposed to other traditional methodologies, the organization of textual resources had to be more or less specific to the data and research question.

Thus in the current research the analyzing process was approached as a simple mechanical *modus operandi* of reading, filtering and highlighting salient portions of the texts, that preceded the actual analytical process of the research. As previously noted this was guided by constructionist postulations and sensitivities with regard to language exercise and contextual knowledge of society based on secondary information. Moreover the interaction perceived through reviewing the textual materials had to be guided by the research question and highlighted with cogent theoretical underpinnings and already existing secondary data, to be explicated in the next chapter. Whilst reading the data materials used, a continuous positing of questions was kept in mind in order to fully grasp any ulterior meanings that the person who has produced the discourse may have been implying. Posing oneself such questions in relation to the data, while at the same time paying attention to pattern construction and noting variation and details, are aspects of DA considered to be integral aspects of an analysis and more specifically to its actual writing-up. A list of such questions was produced by Nikander (2008), which includes:

- What do speakers produce as relevant in this account?

- Who is the designated audience?
- How do recipients or intended audience interpret what is being said, what is their uptake?
- Why this particular category/detail/silence here? Is the speaker doing some extra discursive work or accounting?
- Why does a feeling that some topic is avoided or only alluded to? What are participants orienting to in their talk?

According to Wood & Kroger (2000), relevant discourse patterns that may emerge can either be synchronic, i.e. used by only a particular orator or diachronic i.e. recurring in the discourse produced by different public speakers. Therefore in the current research apart from posing such questions as those illustrated above, cross-referencing and notations of diachronic and synchronic usages of discourse will be clearly formulated.

## **2.7 Text Transcripts Validity and Reliability**

In this next part what will be addressed is the reliability and validity of producing a good level DA using data in the form of textual transcripts. In general terms producing a good quality discursive study in the context of social science, requires building up a body of work that stands on solid foundations of “ethically sound starting points and principles” (Nikander, 2008). Among the general strengths for opting to work with textual transcripts is given by



Nikander (2008) when stating that these afford a very exhaustive and easily accessible portrayal of social phenomena and actions. In the methodological procedure of DA “the detail empirical material is presented in a form that allows the readers and fellow researchers to make their own checks and judgments.” Moreover Nikander (2008) also states that transcripts confer a certain sense of intelligibility and immediacy to the specific social experience being tackled.

Further more the reader of such study is virtually provided with the opportunity of assessing and examining the actual data used for oneself, in parallel to what the researcher actually provides. This is a major strength that further deepens the scope of the study and may potentially allow other researchers or commentators to expound or further critique the subject matter. Another related strength with regards to analysis of textual transcripts of speeches is “rigorous in its requirement of an empirical grounding for any description to be accepted as valid” (Peräkylä 1997, cited in Nikander, 2008). Henceforth this requires the resultant observations of the data scrutinized to be steadfastly anchored in data produced by previous studies. Nonetheless this feature of DA allows for more freedom in comparison to for example the discursive analysis of a conversation. However in a more pronounced manner when compared to other methodologies, the ultimate assessment of the analysis’ claims, its acuity and persuasiveness, in the end rest in the hands of the reader. To this effect Nikander, (2008) argues that this form of DA combines together analytic grounding with the symbolic rhetorical persuasive qualities of the study, which is actively judged on its validity in real time by its readers.

To give an example of a major advantage bestowed by the utilization of text transcripts, arises when comparing this methodology to that of ethnography, that requires the researcher to mingle with participants and take field notes on which the study is built. However such notes carry with them the disadvantage of having undeterminable accuracy and access to these is limited since it depends on the researcher's discretion to divulge them in their entirety. Whereas in the case of analysis of already existing textual data, that is freely available from their actual sources, as is the case with the current study, the aforementioned problems are significantly reduced. Whereas the use of field notes in a study entails the conversion of researcher observation into text, the use of already existing text eliminates the pitfalls that may arise from poor note taking and memory lacunae on the researcher's part. Therefore in contrast to ethnography, where the reader usually does not have direct access to the actual happenings, DA does not require the reader to blindly trust the researcher's interpretations and descriptions, and thus can be actively involved in the analysis. Field notes can be potentially tainted with the researcher's bias through tailored selective approach and construction of rhetoric. On the other hand textual DA, whereas it would entail the researcher's interpretations and possibly a modicum of slant, such slants become easily noticeable to the reader. Thus as Nikander (2008) argues, the reader has more access to 'reality' through transcript DA and thus it allows for solid foundations for analysis and validity, while efficiently eliminating specific problems. In terms of research's reliability, Peräkylä (1997, cited in Nikander, 2008) highlights textual DA's high "degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research." Therefore a sure way to secure a good measure of reliability in the case of the textual transcripts to be

used in the current research entails an adequate level of consideration given to the sampling or selection of material.

## **2.8 Limits of textual Discourse Analysis**

According to Fairclough (2003) textual DA is a resource for social research that can be enhanced only provided that it can be used in conjunction with other methods of analysis. Fairclough (2003) argues that by itself, textual analysis is limited. This limitedness of textual DA relates with the involvement of texts in meaning-making, the causal effects of texts, and the specifically ideological effects of texts. Such facets of analyses are difficult to acquire through thorough textual analysis alone. In order to research meaning-making Fairclough (2003) argues that one needs to look at other interpretations of texts if there are in existence, as well as texts themselves, and more generally at how texts practically figure in particular areas of social life. Thus Fairclough (2003) suggests that textual analysis is best framed within ethnography. In consequence Fairclough (2003) argues that in order to assess the ideological and causal effects of texts, one ideally is needed to frame textual discourse analysis linking the ‘micro’ analysis of texts to the ‘macro’ analysis of how power relations work across networks of practices and structures. Consequently it is arguable that textual analysis is a valuable supplement to social research, however not a replacement for other forms of social research and analysis.

## **2.9 Limitations and Difficulties Encountered**

The greatest difficulty encountered whilst conducting this type of research was owed to the researcher's own inexperience with this form of methodology, since all prior studies carried out by the same researcher have stemmed from a positivist approach to research. Nonetheless such initial difficulty was countered by referring to an appropriate amount of literature relevant to the manner in which DA is carried out. Moreover another insidious difficulty encountered was what is commonly known as researcher bias that given the interpretative nature of the research method employed can become a serious pitfall, which could jeopardize the outcome and reliability of the project if not kept in check. Therefore quickly becoming self-aware of this problem and constantly referring to the literature and not let the analysis digress from the actual content of the material being studied, was deemed imperative for the purposes of objective soundness, even though the method used arguably contains some subjective traits intrinsic to its nature.

One other limitation encountered was that a part of the textual materials used were transcriptions produced by third parties that were translated from Hebrew into English. Nonetheless one has to point out that the origin of such materials was deemed reliable as these were directly sourced from the Israeli Foreign Relations Ministry website that can be found in the reference section of this study. However there is a certain amount of risk that some of the content meaning was lost in translation. Further more the researcher does not speak Hebrew and thus could not verify certain aspects of the

materials from the original Hebrew transcriptions. Therefore such limitation was beyond the researcher's linguistic capabilities and thus some level of benefit of the doubt has to be applied. To this effect Nikander (2008) argues that presenting the data in its original form in conjunction with the translation into the language needed (in most cases English) is a standard that adequately fits the principles of validity and reliability through transparency iterated earlier. However for the scope of this research such undertaking would be superfluous, time consuming and would not add an iota to its general soundness. Therefore such verification was left in the hands of other researchers who would see fit to delve deeper in the research at hand using the original texts to check for consistency.

## **2.10 Ethical Considerations**

Given the nature of the data that shall be analyzed in this study, none of the ethical implications pertaining to anonymity or informed consent of participants apply. However this does not preclude the current study from adhering to a strict ethical conduct. First and foremost every idea contained in this study that has been put forward by other researchers was correctly cited and referenced. Furthermore this research was carried out with the utmost fairness possible, inasmuch that particular carefulness was taken by the researcher not to produce an unbalanced or biased work. The research question was approached from various angles clearly displaying the pros and cons of the

literature being reviewed. It was also constructed in such a way as not to offend the moral values and sensibilities of anyone who reads it.

## **CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.1 Introduction: Empirical Grounding of Study**

In order to ground the theoretical aspects of the current research and thus probe the proportionality employed in OCL from the perspective of chosen trauma, one needs to be supplied with data that supports the aims of the current research. Hence to achieve such aim this chapter shall deal primarily with elucidating the origins of the issue that put the proportionality principle applied by the Israeli forces into question in the first place and to what extent was this informed by the public opinions of the Israeli population in general from a large group psychological perspective. For this purpose reliable data on the outcome of the Israeli Air Force and IDF's actions in Gaza shall be supplied in relation to the concept of proportionality and compared to Israeli damage incurred from the attacks on Hamas' part. Such information will be investigated in order to compare it to prior empirical studies that assess the level of perception of threat, anxiety or distrust of the out-group, experienced by representative samples of the Israeli population. Furthermore such prior studies will be put through the lens of chosen trauma theory and similarly oriented psycho-social theoretical standpoints of conflict, in order to determine whether actual congruencies or traits of chosen trauma in fact are reflected in the results of such studies. However the initial part of this chapter shall deal with the theoretical

aspects of the study. Consequently the current researcher shall determine what kind of characteristics the actual analysis of the current research will have to look for in the official public addresses of Israeli leaders incumbent during OCL.

### **3.2 Psychology of the Modern Nation State**

In 1882 the philosopher and scholar Ernst Renan (cited in Zimmern, 1939) delivered a lecture entitled “what is the nation,” which was delivered in the wake of the Franco-Prussian war that at the time was as contentious an issue as is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in today’s context. Nonetheless Renan illustrates a template of his idealized concept of nation and starts off by categorically rejecting various very familiar categories and concepts as to what would constitute a basis for a nation. Renan rejects race as the basis of a nation, holding that it is much too insubstantial and mutable a model and continues by asserting that races fade and evolve. Similarly he states that language is not a basic foundation of a nation and neither is religion or geography. In Renan’s view what really constitutes the basis of a nation is a sharing of common experience that would normally consist both of glory and grief as he puts it. Therefore in this manner the ability to mourn is crucial in a healthy development of a national identity and a sense of nationhood, much like what is proposed by Volkan’s (1997) theories. In fact Volkan (1997) argues that a politico-legal definition of the term nation is problematic, and since nations were founded in different contexts the degree of inclusion and exclusion, of entitlement and grievance vary accordingly. Renan posits more bluntly that there has to



be a common heritage to draw onto and that this would normally consist of memories, glorious achievements, sacrifice and grief. To this effect Renan contends:

“I spoke just now of 'having suffered together' and, indeed, suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort.”

This resembles what Avruch (2012) affirms of nationalism as being ethnicity with claims to a sovereign state. Nonetheless Renan argues that the real essence of a nation is the combined aggregate of men and women forming it, who embody the will of a particular generation to be part of that nation. Renan goes as far as to state that essentially a nation is an agglomeration of people who choose to be part of a nation, by making the famous observation that a nation resembles “a daily plebiscite.” Billig (1995) elucidates that this metaphor draws attention to the psychological dimension of nationalism. Thus this notion of a daily plebiscite suggests a psychology of the conscious will, that clearly expresses the desire to sustain a shared experience. This is of course the common will of the individuals since nations do not have an absolute existence, only one that is collectively agreed upon. Therefore one may infer that this idea implies a psychology of conscious will but also in part one of collective acts of imagination, since not all processes are conscious choices. Billig (1995) argues that “just as a language will die for want of regular users, so a nation must be put to daily use.” Furthermore Billig (1995) argues that the kind of daily plebiscite described by Renan attains solidity through habitual routines that include habits of discourse. Such processes enable ‘the people’ to

identify themselves, and thereby psychologically reproduce themselves, as ‘the people’. Thus the voters in liberal democracies at election times choose ‘their’ desired leaders and set the political course of ‘their’ national destiny, depending on the surrounding context. For example it will be shown later on in this chapter that Israeli political views lean to the right part of the spectrum often espousing the Zionist narrative in time of threat.

Hence will and in effect consent, are of the essence for the basis of a nation. For Renan an ongoing consent is what makes for a basic nation, however than he adds one other crucial point. This is forgetting, that is part of what constitutes a nation, therefore one has to mourn, take pride in the glorious achievements of the past, pay homage to the sacrifice of predecessors, but equally important to Renan is the knowledge of how to forget. Thus a nation is this persistent consent to “a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future.” At one point Renan also asserts that in many cases unity is affected by means of brutality and often the result of massacres and terror.

### **3.3 Chosen Trauma, Failure to Mourn and Israel**

As stated in the introduction one ought to differentiate between individual psychology and that of large groups such as nation groups, ethnic or religious groups. Volkan (1997) argues that since LGs are comprised of hundreds of thousands or millions of people, these LGs will reflect the psychology of people. However one cannot talk of a

single consciousness possessed by an LG, instead the individual psychology is reflected communally through the LG, where emotional responses in LGs appear or manifest in societal political processes and discourses. Volkan (1997) argues that when nation states find themselves in a situation of psychological regression; when people lose people, prestige, land and dignity, a need to collectively mourn losses arises. Volkan's theoretical framework presupposes that a traumatized society does not possess the emotional means to engage in a lasting peace because it always exists in a heightened state of anxiety and if it has the means, is always ready to retort violently to any perceived hazard to its security and survival.

One should add that both sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been known to have suffered trauma over the last 60 years of conflict and thus such notion compels a more detailed analysis into the interrelationship between two or more clashing large group identities. Volkan (1997) contends that the psychological explanation of identity entails inherited memory as a performed narrative, transgenerational relationship between past, present and future, that collapses down to a repeating traumatic present when in contact with direct violence. Volkan (1997) describes this feature as time collapse, during which "the interpretations, fantasies, and feelings about a past shared trauma commingle with those pertaining to a current situation." In this state individuals may "intellectually separate the past event from the present one, but emotionally the two events are merged." An example of this is supplied by Yurman (2008) by illustrating how during the first Lebanon War, when the IDF was surrounding Beirut, "then Prime Minister Menachem

Begin, compared Yasser Arafat to Hitler hiding in his bunker.”Trauma from this perspective can be defined as a deeply distressing or disturbing experience, often one that causes emotional or physical shock and potentially leads to long-term neurosis. Volkan (1997) argues that such trauma:

- on the individual level questions the very foundations of self-consciousness, disrupting the individual’s capacity for learning and absorbing new experiences.
- on the communal or LG level, trauma throws into question fundamental perceptions of the group that result into rigid notions of “weness” or rather “us” against “them.”

According to Volkan (1997) the psychology of mourning apart from being important to individuals it is also necessary to the development of nation states or during the formation of new States. Therefore when individuals are unable to mourn past trauma properly one of the various features LGs may develop is ideological irredentism that this author describes as being a political entitlement ideology and a mechanism to recover losses. An example of this from the Israeli sphere is the nationalist movement of political Zionism (Volkan, 2009). This in turn potentially leads other nation states or LGs to have to deal with their own mourning processes and irredentist ideas (as in the case of the Palestinians), when they are left with a feeling of helplessness and idealization of victimization, which consequently lead to other problems such as Hamas’ terror attacks

in the current case. Volkan (1997) posits that when discussing such processes the need arises to constantly compare individual psychology with LG psychology, because in order to understand political societal processes (of which war constitutes an extreme form), especially when societies are in a state of regression, the personalities of the leaders assume an elevated state of importance and as a result this leads to the larger societal processes in a sort of feedback loop, thus leadership and citizenry inform each others' actions according to prevalent socio-psychological subtexts.

A historical context of collective trauma is typically associated with a security threat, as stated in the introduction. These threats encompass a wide range of possible meanings that might include prejudice, denial of rights, expulsion and also extermination. These also raise questions of legitimacy and the right of a group to exist as it sees itself. Identity thus becomes the conduit through which threats to security are experienced. In the case of the Israeli experience, identity functions primarily in relation and reaction to repetitive threats to the existence of its nation from Israel's enemies. As a nation it is therefore born and perpetuated immediately at the extreme end of the spectrum of association and in reflection to the Palestinian "other," in the current study represented by Hamas. In this regard identity is a dominant and rhetorical tool for the people to demarcate political or social communities, thus framing rights of self-determination, legitimate rule or self-defense by reference to the people of a country. As documented by Volkan (1997) identity plays a central role in determining the psychological and political outcome of a country.

Volkan (1997) describes identity as found in psychoanalysis as being a persistent sense of sameness individuals acquire. Hence in the context of LGs one may talk of millions of people acquiring a persistent sense of sameness. From childhood on, an individual develops his/her identity that from a subjective point of view is also known as a self-representation. Volkan (1997) maintains that every individual in a LG wears two layers of identity, the personal identity and the larger “tent canvas” identity that engulfs and is shared by all members of that LG. This structure is maintained by a LG as a “container that provides safety and cohesion, defines basic values, and differentiates ‘us’ from out-groups, onto whom the rejected ‘bad’ aspects of the self-group can be projected” (Kemp, 2011). Under normal conditions individuals go about their daily lives without being consciously aware of this second larger identity and only when this comes under attack, individuals become highly concerned with such larger identity, at which point the personal identity takes on a secondary role. Thus this larger group canopy is incorporated by the personal identities of individuals and in part constitutes the individual’s core self. Volkan (2002) argues that tears in the tent structure are experienced by members of a group as threats occasioning profound anxiety and states of terror. Nonetheless Volkan (1997) argues that this larger identity is not merely “nationhood” which is more of a legal conceptualized idea, but rather he affirms that the root of all LG identities is ethnicity.

Unlike in the case of traumas produced by natural disasters or plagues, when tragedies occur to LGs at the hand of others, such group identity becomes tarnished and is

humiliated by the “other.” When this occurs Volkan (1997) argues that the individual is also humiliated and if such situation extends over a prolonged period of time, this feeling of humiliation is required to be internalized, if one is not in the position to be assertive or express aggression. When a LG subsist under the influence of an oppressor for long enough, Volkan (1997) argues that the group as a whole is prone to start identifying with its predicament and the oppressor. Furthermore when such a LG obtains nation statehood whilst still burdened psychologically with elements of humiliation that are difficult to be expressed fully through LG identity, the mourning process of injured identity will be difficult and/or sometimes it becomes repressed. When repression occurs the feelings of helplessness are initially denied and replaced by feelings of assertiveness and aggrandized nationalism as argued by Grossbard (2003) in relation to the founding of Israel and Volkan (1997) when arguing about the “synthetic” nature of Israel as a nation.

In Grossbard’s (2003) terms Israel is a state that was founded on previous trauma of the Jews. The Nazi Holocaust represents the peak of eradication and humiliation the Jewish population experienced. Grossbard (2003) asserts that from an experience of chosenness and feelings of superiority, rooted in religious beliefs, the Holocaust engendered an opposite inner experience of worthlessness and victimhood. Consequently Grossbard (2003) argues that from such a complicated starting point, a relatively small segment of the Jewish people decided to establish their own state, thus return to their ancestral homeland. Volkan (2004) argues that such massively traumatized groups do not manage to successfully go through an adequate mourning process, as suggested by

Renan. This lack of mourning according to Volkan (2004) upsets the group psychology of the subsequent generations of the same group, thus reversing and integrating feelings of shame, mortification and helplessness becomes problematic.

A clear example of such thwarted mourning process and repression from the Israeli group identity is given by Volkan (1997, 2006), Klain & Pavic (2002) and Finkelstein (2003) when describing the initial suppression to publicly acknowledge Holocaust survivors who came to Israel after WWII. After their arrival in 1940s to Israel, these had been immediately treated for depression and other mental disorders in psychiatric hospitals (Volkan, 2006). However astonishingly enough many of these patients' official files did not even mention that they were Holocaust victims (Volkan, 2006). These were faced with the complex attitudes of Israeli society by being rejected and blamed for their sufferings (Klain & Pavic, 2002, Yurman, 2008). Kemp (2011) argues that Holocaust survivors were for many years marginalized in Israel, perceived as examples of what the 'new Jew' was intended to replace or repress. According to Volkan (2006) for a long time, psychological studies of the Holocaust were too painful to be carried out, and the whole topic of its psychological impact on those who were affected directly and on the human psyche in general was avoided. Such nations and large groups that suppress these feelings according to Volkan (2004) "cannot assert themselves in socially or politically adaptive ways and may end up internalizing a sense of helpless rage, idealizing masochism, or becoming prone to maladaptive sadistic manifestations that are all shared by their community at large." For example Israeli denial of the



Palestinian expulsion can be considered in this regard as an example of suppression of previous helplessness. In consequence members of a massively traumatized group face the problem of being incapable of completing certain psychological tasks which in return then are transmitted to the next generations along with the conscious and unconscious shared aspiration that the next generation will manage to resolve (Volkan, 2006). In this regard Volkan (1997) posits that:

“[...] later generations may attempt to erase the memory of the past event. In this case, the memory of the past trauma remains dormant for several generations, kept within the psy-chological DNA of the members of the group and silently acknowl-edged within the culture - in literature and art, for example - but it reemerges powerfully only under certain conditions.”

Volkan (2006, 2009) also argues that following a massive trauma at the hands of others pertaining to a different large-group identity, members of a LG experience a combination of the following shared experiences:

- 1- Sense of victimization and being exposed to dehumanization,
- 2- Sense of open pain and hidden shame and humiliation due to helplessness,
- 3- Sense of guilt for surviving while others perished,
- 4- Inability to be assertive,
- 5- Increase in externalizations/projections,
- 6- Exaggeration of "bad" prejudice,
- 7- Increase in narcissistic investment in large-group identity,
- 8- Envy toward the victimizer and (defensive) identification with the oppressor,
- 9- Difficulty, or often inability, to mourn losses.

As a result when these shared psychological experiences persist and the members of a large group cannot find adaptive solutions for them, they become involved in the next shared experience explicated by Volkan:

10- Shared transgenerational transmission of psychological tasks to deal with the influence of the trauma.

Initially in Israel's case the associated transmission of trauma functioned to ensure social cohesion and promote emotional regression (Grossbaard, 2003). The mythologized evolution of the Jewish persecution, the Diaspora, the proselytizing and forced conversions during the Inquisition era, the eastern-European pogroms and the Nazi holocaust among others, all reflected repressed memories meant to institutionalize trauma, entrench shame, feelings of helplessness and anger but also the categorical resolution to never allow anything so traumatic to overwhelm Jews ever again. Grossbard (2003) argues that at Israel's inception in 1948 the repressed anxieties of annihilation engendered a determined fervor to quash any attack. Therefore the expulsion of Palestinians was perceived as an unfortunate necessity since Israel's very existence was at stake. Furthermore in the backdrop of the third of world Jewry that was exterminated in WWII, Israel was seen as the only line of defense against existential threats. As a result Israeli identity became entrenched to the point of becoming a societal and political expression or ideology. Furthermore Grossbard (2003) states that Israeli military supremacy during the 1948 War of Independence and the 1967 Six Day War helped instill a sense of omnipotence in Israeli collective identity, in order to replace the

previous humiliations and victimhood. Grossbard (2003) argues that the Six Day War represented the peak of repression of feelings of existential threat and the peak of failure to see the whole picture and not to distort reality. Therefore instances of loss of control such as the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the First Intifada served to rekindle previous humiliation that stemmed from egocentric thinking, directed by Israeli perceived threat, and prevented them as a LG from acknowledging the other. Grossbard (2003) contends that this represents the vicious circle from which a paranoid personality cannot break free, being afraid of being hurt, than unconsciously inviting such ordeals out of defensiveness, and incessantly reliving past anxieties and traumas.

It is in these conditions that Volkan identifies the development of a chosen trauma, where a LG possesses a mental representation of history that under certain circumstances become reactivated. Volkan (1997) gives the example of the former state of Yugoslavia, after which its collapse its populations started to pose questions about what sort of identity they were to adopt. Volkan states that this point of identity crises is an utmost dangerous time since such loss of identity is liable to provoke regression. Therefore the leadership may opt to reactivate the LG's chosen trauma or mental representations of what had been done to the group, such action may well result in a condition of ideological entitlement, irredentist mentality and in extreme cases in indiscriminate killing of the "out group" members. Thus in this view Volkan asserts that researchers should expand their knowledge of LGs and add more psychological process

to the concept in order to be able to come up with new strategies to deal with human predictable reactions.

What Volkan intends to convey through his theory is that without understanding the power and dynamics of human emotions one may never understand what real power these carry, both in the potential for destruction and as well as for evolution and transformation, that the individuals forming a LG possess. To posit such notion analogically, under normal conditions people are not usually aware of the body's automatic motor bodily functions, the most basic of which being breathing. However if the building (or tent to stick with Volkan's metaphor) a group of people is in, is set aflame, suddenly the act of breathing becomes the only action every individual is aware of. This constitutes regression, the state where ethnic identity acquires priority above all other actions in order to fulfill the basic need for survival. The tent analogy in Volkan's (1997) example is held erect with the pole of the tent, this represents the political leadership. "From an individual psychology point of view, the pole may represent an oedipal father; from a large-group psychology point of view, the pole's task is to keep the tent's canvas erect, to maintain and protect the large-group identity" (Volkan 1997).

Moreover as Volkan's theories postulate that this sense of heightened awareness or anxiety as a result of perceived or actual physical threats may become irrationally accentuated through the experience of former prolonged trauma. Therefore when identity that Volkan (1997) specifies through ethnicity, is threatened every individual becomes

aware of the predicament. Under particular circumstances it can prime the group to become able to tolerate the most severe masochism, as well as become able to inflict the most extreme forms of sadism in order to be able to hold on to that larger group identity. Volkan (1997) argues that when a LG identity is threatened, for example by Hamas' attacks in Israel's case, the ethnic, national, religious or ideological large group is prone to regress. At such point of regression LGs become involved in certain societal processes that serve to maintain, protect and repair the large-group identity. Volkan (2005) posits that since LGs encompass their own specific characteristics which are built upon their own centuries-old continua and shared mental representations of history and myth, the examination of signs and symptoms of their regression should also include shared psychodynamics that are specific to each group. Furthermore according to Volkan (2005) a need arises to "go beyond a general description of the emergence of aggression in large groups, when they regress, and their shared paranoid or narcissistic sentiments, and refer to actual manifestations of regression within each specific large group."

"When a large group is in a regressed state, the personalities and the internal world of the political leadership assumes great importance concerning the manipulation (the "good" or the "bad") of what already exists within the large- group psychology [...] Two types of splitting are also signs of large-group regression. First, a splitting between "us" and "them" (the enemy outside the regressed large group) becomes pronounced and the "other" becomes a target for dehumanization. Second, following the initial rallying around the leader, a severe split may occur within the society itself." (Volkan, 1997).

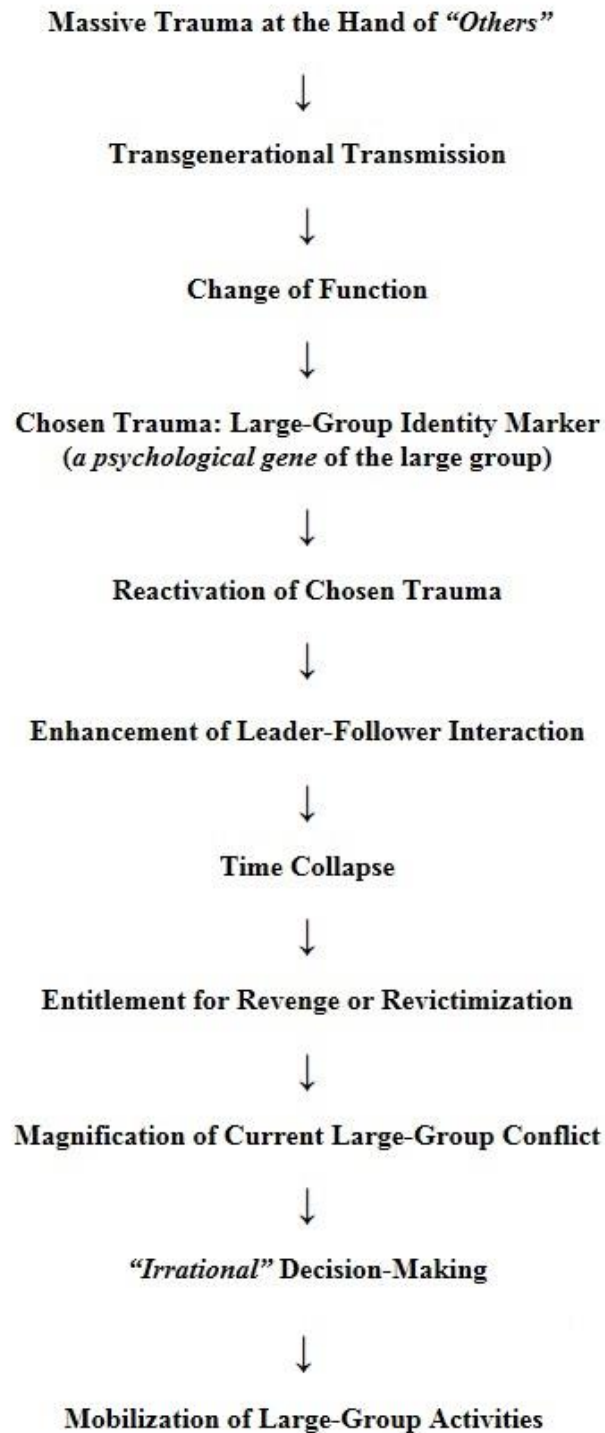


Fig.1 Source: Volkan (2008)

The previous schematic diagram displays the stages through which a LG that underwent trauma in the past goes through as theorized by Volkan (2008). This also occurs at the individual level or small collective, as outbursts of resistance against victimization to terror of previous traumas, for example those highlighted by Grossbard (2003) from the Israeli sphere such as the loss incurred after the Yom Kipur war, the fear generated by the first intifada and the questioning of Israeli identity in the wake of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination at the hand of another Israeli. Such traumas may lead to complicated mourning processes and revictimization, especially when this is institutionalized and disseminated through societal features such as the national draft, education, culture and the media. Bar-Tal (2007) argues that a recurring feature of the collective memories and beliefs of groups in intractable conflicts give rise to four significant themes, which shall be looked for in the analysis of this case study in relation to the principle of proportionality in OCL. Such themes are, justification for the outbreak of the conflict and its enlargement, positive representation of the in-group, persistent delegitimization of the enemy or 'other' and the representation of victimhood at the hand of the enemy. All of these form a particular view of a conflict that Bar-Tal (2007) argues as having their origin in the losses and suffering incurred over a long period of time. Bar-Tal (2007) posits that such features are "formed over a long period of violence as a result of the society's sufferings and losses and is sometimes even viewed as chosen trauma," thus are symptomatic characteristics of it, which then perpetuates itself from one generation to the next. These features will be tied empirically to chosen trauma in the current chapter and it is held by the current researcher that their portrayal in public

discourse directly informs individuals ascribing to specific mental formulations of former trauma.

Moreover factionalism and polarization within the Israeli political landscape in recent years could also be attributable to this history of violence. Actively engaging in reciprocal violence as a means to achieve specific goals legitimizes force and coercion as acceptable tactics in fighting terror by all means and hence modulates the application of proportionality in open conflict. Furthermore ever since the formation of Israel much needed LG self-esteem had been generated, particularly through the initial victories in the Arab-Israeli conflict. These events allowed Israelis the ability to muster the power to repel violently any aggressors, whereas prior generations of Jews were more or less helpless and did not possess the means for assertiveness. However the experienced violent subjugation of earlier generations arguably became the Israeli reflected modus operandi employed to deal with all threats to security, projected onto their enemies. Collective cumulative trauma thus becomes institutionalized as social consciousness that is potentially identifiable in official political discourse. The notion that chosen trauma is transmitted generationally, leads to maladaptive perpetual mourning and consequently to misplaced judgment and action, which has clear ramifications in the context of proportionality in the current research. Whereas the actual triggering of a past chosen trauma is not expected to be found through this analysis, the aforementioned four characteristics are expected to be prevalent in Israeli public discourse during OCL.



### **3.4 OCL Disproportionate or Proportionate Military Action?**

OCL was the first full-scale military incursion into Gaza since the 2005 Israeli Disengagement Plan, when in September 2005, Israel unilaterally declared an end to its forty year occupation of the Strip, dismantled its settlements, evacuated all settlers and IDF personnel from Gaza (Power, 2009). The officially stated Israeli goal of OCL was to diminish the security threat to residents of southern Israel by steeply reducing rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, significantly crippling Hamas, and restoring Israel's deterrence after the 2006 Second Lebanon War (Zanotti, 2010). Thus Erakat (2009) illustrates that Israel justified its incursion into Gaza as a reaction to Hamas' rocket attacks towards Israel, which violated the existing ceasefire that had been brokered by Egypt in June 2008. In Volkan's (1997) terms, such attack from the enemy is neither 'merely' a projection, nor 'merely' reality, but contains elements of both. Volkan (1997) in this regard remarks that a "neighbor group that attacks us, bombs our land, kills our people, is real, but because we externalize and project our unwanted elements onto enemies, they are also products of our fantasies." In fact OCL took place after several weeks of sporadic military actions into Gaza by Israeli forces, that later escalated into an offensive assigned with the endeavor to stop Hamas and other militant groups from launching rockets into Southern Israel and smuggling weapons through the Rafah tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border (Power, 2009) predominantly coming from Iran and Syria (Feinstein, 2009).

The position taken by Israel to explain its motives for initiation OCL are reflected by the arguments put forward by Finstein (2009). This author explains how Israel had been subjected to terrorism originating in Gaza since 2001. Such attacks took the form of rocket fire and mortar shelling that Finstein (2009) reports to have reached a number in excess of 8000 projectiles aimed at Southern Israel, of which many have resulted in deaths. The targeted region immediately next to the Strip is the abode of approximately one million Israeli citizens that constitute around 15% of the total population (Finstein, 2009). According to the same author following Israel's disengagement from Gaza the barrages actually intensified, increasing by more than 500% (from 179 to 946) from the previous years. Despite the Israeli withdrawal these unyielding attacks spiked and this further served to humiliate and aggravate Israeli perception of threat. In fact the traumatic effect the Disengagement Plan had on the population was expressed in a large post-evacuation survey published by the University of Tel Aviv, that showed how 61% of the participants chose the phrase "hurting and pained" as best describing Israel in the disengagement's aftermath (Halkin, 2005). Moreover public protests regarding the Disengagement often made use of WW II symbols. To this effect Kellermann (2009) asserts that "the settlers' opposition to the withdrawal utilized a multitude of Holocaust symbols, including wearing a yellow/orange star with the word *Jude*, and calling Israeli soldiers *Nazis* and accusing them of carrying out a *pogrom*."

Moreover Finstein (2009) argues that in 2008 alone more than 3250 projectiles came over from Gaza, aimed at Israeli territories that contain civilians and civilian

objects. Apart from the Israeli casualties caused by these terrorist attacks, Israelis have “suffered from long-term anxiety, shock, and trauma as a result of the accumulated psychological impact on the hundreds of thousands of Israelis living within range of the terrorists’ rockets” (Finstein, 2009). Hamas’ mortar and unguided missile attacks were inherently indiscriminate and therefore illegitimate under IHL. Although in most cases the rudimentary rockets produced by Hamas exploded in uninhabited areas, without resulting in casualties, each of these rockets was “potentially lethal and the intensified barrage of such rockets throughout the twenty-two days of Operation “Cast Lead” caused panic among the civilian population of southern Israel” (Amnesty International, 2009). Thousands of Israeli families fled to other parts of the country and those who stayed in their residencies in the south had to find shelter every time the alarm was sounded, warning of an incoming barrage. While it is a fact that Hamas did indeed persist with its rocket attacks that eventually led to OCL, however “it did so in response to an Israeli raid into Gaza that killed six Hamas militants on November 4, 2008,” four months into the ceasefire (Erakat, 2009). The next excerpt from Erakat (2009) shows that in fact the chain of events that has led to OCL may have well indeed been initiated by the Israeli perception of imminent threat:

“Far from renewing its cross-border rocket attacks during the short-lived truce, Hamas rocket fire declined significantly. According to the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, the number of rockets fell from three digit numbers to single digits: one in July, eight in August, one in September, and one in October. Additionally, according to the Center, Hamas was not responsible for any of the rocket fire into Israel during the ceasefire.”

According to the Israeli government its raid did not amount to a violation of ceasefire since its aim was a preemptive elimination of an immediate threat and thus amounted to self-defense. As stated earlier OCL falls in the category of modern asymmetric warfare that according to Banks (2011), often give rise to troubling implications of compliance with the law of war (*jus in bello*) as was the case in OCL. However Banks (2011) argues that the nature of modern asymmetric warfare leads to operational weaknesses in the applicability of the law. In spite of such notion the only exception within the bounds of International law to the proscription on unilateral engagement in armed combat and use of force is self-defense. Thus Erakat (2009) argues that the legal nature of OCL was dependent on it being characterized as an act of self-defense as opposed to one of aggression. Consequently the same author asserts that during the campaign and its aftermath, Israel as well as its allies portrayed the offensive as one of self-defense. According to Erakat (2009):

“The doctrine of self-defense in international law continues to be a salient topic. Its contentious nature is perpetuated by two schools of thought: one that suggests that self-defense is circumscribed by the UN Charter, and the other that posits that the modern Charter system does not subsume but rather complements pre-existing customary international law. In the first instance, an “armed attack” must trigger a forceful response and in the second, preemptive actions and actions intended to eschew compliance with international law are accepted so long as they meet the tests of necessity, immediacy, and proportionality. The linchpin of both frameworks is proportionality [...] Proportionality stipulates that whether or not a belligerent had the right to defend itself, the exercise of its right must be proportional to its stated military goals. This applies to cases triggered by an armed attack as well as those intended to be preemptive or

deterrent. As such, the net beneath any analysis of self-defense is the doctrine of proportionality.”

Again when one assesses Israeli claims to self-defense in OCL and its related questions of proportionality, one should be mindful of the numerous Israeli actions in Gaza that resulted in high Palestinian casualties, which took place between September 2005 and December 2008. Apart from the aforementioned attack in November 2008 one has to also take into consideration that Israel blockaded Gaza for eighteen months prior to the escalation of OCL. Furthermore according to Kattan (2009) in an evaluation of proportionality of this particular case one cannot disregard the scale of Palestinian deaths during the three years before the initiation of OCL. Kattan (2009) quoting data gathered by the United Nations Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, affirms that in the span of time between the Disengagement and OCL, Israeli forces have caused the deaths of around 1250 Gazan inhabitants, including some 222 children.

Again an inference purported by Grossbard (2003) with regards to the definition of psychopathological personality of group identity, this author posits that Israelis have grown to be unable to identify with the ‘other’ and empathize with their pain. As yet Grossbard (2003) argues that Israelis have consistently failed to master the distinction between an act of aggression and one of self-defense. Moreover Solomon (2010) argues that the exercise of the right of self-defense and application of Article 51 of the UN Charter, hence when a state is under attack by a non-state actor has become crystallized in modern times since the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the United States. Under the

international laws of ‘right to war’ (*jus ad bellum*) Israel was allowed to exercise its natural right of self-defense and its duty to prevent further attacks against its citizens and to rid itself of any threat caused by terrorism (Feinstein, 2009). According to Banks (2011) when under attack by a non-state actor a sovereign state is often faced with a dilemma that has become common in such war efforts. In Israel’s case prior to the start of OCL this problem involved the choice between abiding with the laws of armed conflict and act only with the aim of curtailing the enemy attack, in order to minimize civilian casualties. However such action entails a compromise with the military objective and leaving its own citizens vulnerable to enemy fire. The other course, which was eventually taken by Israel, was not to scale down the plans of OCL and carrying it out in one of the most densely populated urban areas in the region. In fact on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was reported by The Telegraph (2009) stating that the Israeli government had admonished Hamas prior to the war that “if there is rocket fire against the South of the country, there will be a severe and disproportionate Israeli response to the fire on the citizens of Israel and its security forces.” Such a statement confirms the notion proposed by Avruch (2012) whereby this author asserts that Israel has a tendency, which is rooted in its cultural and psychological context, to suppose that the more disproportionate the punishment, the greater the enemy’s compliance will be in the long-run. Moreover Fisher and Wicker (2010) state that the following is a central tenet of proportionality:

“Action must not be taken in which the incidental harm done is an unreasonably heavy price to incur for likely military benefit. Harm needs

to be weighed particularly - but not only - in relation to the lives and well-being of innocent people. The lives of friendly military personnel need to be brought into account, and sometimes even those of adversaries. The principle of avoiding unnecessary force always applies.”

### **3.5 Nature of Damage in Gaza**

Hence this requires an investigation of the actual damage caused by the Israeli incursion in Gaza. Zanoliti (2010) argues that questions with regards to who was a legitimate target during the campaign were raised. It is however the case that rockets and mortar shells fired by Palestinian militants and Hamas from Gaza were almost exclusively fired with the aim of killing and terrorizing Israeli civilians (Zanoliti, 2010). In response the Israeli air campaign and ground offensive had as their stated target Hamas militants, but several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have charged that Israel's extensive destruction of cultural, residential, and governmental sites to have disproportionately impacted the Gazan civilian population, despite Israel's insistence that these sites were inextricably linked with Hamas's military operations (Zanoliti, 2010). Amnesty International (2009) in their post-OCL report assert that largely the destruction wreaked was wanton in nature. This report states that such damage resulted from “direct attacks on civilian objects as well as indiscriminate attacks that failed to distinguish between legitimate military targets and civilian objects.” In consequence Amnesty International (2009) found that such attacks violated basic provisions of IHL, notably the proscription on direct attack of civilians and civilian infrastructure, the prohibition on disproportionate actions, and that on collective punishment.

The Journal of Palestine Studies (2009) published a set of figures through the University of California, that display the extent of such damage left in the aftermath of OCL. According to this journal at least “1,417 Palestinians were killed and 4,336 wounded during Operation Cast Lead.” Also according to Erakat (2009) the figure of wounded Gazan civilians included approximately 1,100 children and a resultant civilian death toll which amounted to nearly 70% of all casualties in OCL. Goldstone et al. (2009) in the fact-finding report commissioned by the UN after OCL, state that the actual casualty figure has been disputed by the Israeli government, according to which this was more close to 1100, of whom the IDF claimed that only 300 were civilians. The following excerpt on this matter was taken from Goldstone et al. (2009):

“Based on extensive field research, non-governmental organizations place the overall number of persons killed between 1,387 and 1,417. The Gaza authorities report 1,444 fatalities. The Government of Israel provides a figure of 1,166.”

Despite such disparity in the figures, what was deemed more alarming was the significant incongruence among Palestinian civilian casualties between the sources of the Israeli government and the data from the major non-governmental organizations. According to Goldstone et al. (2009) the data supplied by non-governmental sources on the percentage of civilians among those killed are generally consistent and indicate a figure that is at least three times larger than that provided by the Israeli government. In consequence Goldstone et al. (2009) argue that this raises very serious concerns about the way Israel conducted its military operations in Gaza especially with regards to



proportionality and distinction. The UN fact-finding mission carried out by Goldstone et al. (2009) states:

“The Mission recognizes that not all deaths constitute violations of international humanitarian law. The principle of proportionality acknowledges that under certain strict conditions, actions resulting in the loss of civilian life may not be unlawful. What makes the application and assessment of proportionality difficult in respect of many of the events investigated by the Mission is that deeds by Israeli forces and words of military and political leaders prior to and during the operations indicate that as a whole they were premised on a deliberate policy of disproportionate force aimed not at the enemy but at the “supporting infrastructure.” In practice, this appears to have meant the civilian population.”

The previous statement ties directly with the aims of the current study as it points specifically to instances of public discursive inferences which allude to disproportional action, which will be probed in the following chapters in relation to the theoretical aspects discussed earlier. According to Erakat (2009) what rose further concern were several reports drafted by a number of international human rights organizations and NGOs that illustrated how Israel engaged in the direct targeting of civilians or in the least in behavior that resulted in targeting of civilians. Moreover Erakat (2009) also points out that under the doctrine of proportionality, the single point around which there exists agreement among legal scholars, is the ban on the direct targeting of civilians. Whereas the current researcher does not fully agree, Erakat (2009) posits that even if one was to assume that the Israeli attack was one of self-defense, its resultant disproportional nature would put the legality of the offensive into question. Nonetheless the only casualty figure on which all the sources consulted (see Goldstone et al., 2009, Amnesty International,

2009 and B'Tselem Organization, 2009 amongst others) and the Israeli administration concur was that of Israeli casualties during OCL. These amounted to a total of thirteen of whom ten were IDF soldiers (four of which died due to friendly fire) while the other three were Israeli civilians, who were killed by Hamas' rocket and mortar barrages.

This statistical data is supplied to demonstrate the disparity between casualty figures that later on will be tied to the focus of the current study, that is to determine to what extent such resultant damage that occurred in Gaza is the result by an Israeli group ethos of conflict informed by the notion of chosen trauma. In this respect Abu Nimer and Lazarus (in Kuriansky, 2007) elaborate that a group collective may depend on the reproduction of a certain ethos as a source of shared identity and as a means to bind people together, thus increasing social cohesion. Therefore at the systemic level the Israeli ethos is proposed in the current study to have functioned as an enabler and justifier or ennobler of the Gaza war, making it seem to well-socialized citizens as a necessary and dignified course of action as shall be shown later with statistical data about public support for OCL.

Moreover the following list made available by The Journal of Palestine Studies (2009) provides additional details on the human and physical toll of the operation on the population of Gaza. Displayed overleaf are only the most relevant figures for the aims of the current study:

- Homes destroyed or damaged beyond repair: 6,400
- Homes moderately damaged: 46,000
- Gazans left homeless: 100,000
- Number of people living in UNRWA shelters on 20 January 2009: 18,035
- Percentage of Gaza's population left entirely dependent on food aid: Nearly 90
- Number of children orphaned: 2,000 - 2,200
- Percentage of Gaza residents reporting feelings of depression and despair: 96
- World Health Organization's estimation of Gazans requiring psychological intervention for long-term effects of damage and losses suffered during Operation Cast Lead: 25,000-50,000
- Government buildings destroyed or severely damaged: 25
- Police stations destroyed or severely damaged: 60
- Workshops, industrial facilities, and factories destroyed or severely damaged: 415
- Hospitals and clinics destroyed or severely damaged: 34
- Schools destroyed or severely damaged: 214
- Mosques and churches destroyed or severely damaged: 52
- Private institutions destroyed or severely damaged: 21
- Number of families that depended on agriculture, fishing, or herding whose livelihoods were damaged significantly: 13,000
- Tons of rubble to be removed: 600,000
- Total property damage (including heavy damage to Gaza's water, electricity, and road infrastructure): \$1.6 billion - \$1.9 billion

Fig. 2 Source: The Journal of Palestine Studies (2009)

Such figures represent only a part of the actual long-term human and economic damage wrought upon Gaza. These also show that the number of businesses, civilian homes, public buildings and livestock that were destroyed run in the thousands, so much

so that in particular zones entire neighborhoods were reported to have been completely flattened. In fact Amnesty International (2009) state that the scale and intensity of attacks during OCL were unmatched, even within the context of progressively deadlier Israeli military operations. More property was obliterated and more Palestinian civilians perished over the span of those 22 days than in any other preceding incursion carried out by Israel. These figures can be seen as the result of what Mack (1990) calls “ego of victimhood,” whereby one’s identity concerns preclude the prospect of emotionally empathizing with suffering of the “other.”

A fact repeatedly stressed by Israeli officials and confirmed by Amnesty International (2009) draws attention to Israeli efforts to supply early warning to Palestinian civilians prior to an attack. This was carried out through radio broadcasts, dropping leaflets all over Gaza advising people to leave their homes and random telephone calls with recorded warning messages. Nonetheless these early warnings were known to cause widespread panic while offering meager protection. According to interviews carried out by Amnesty International (2009) in certain areas residents ended up being trapped in their homes, while hearing the IDF warning broadcasts but being unable to leave because the Israeli units in the area did not permit any movement and had orders to open fire in that eventuality, therefore anyone seeking to flee these areas risked becoming a target.

Nonetheless one needs to be careful as not to contend that all civilian casualties and damage were the result of illegal attacks on the Israeli forces' part. One needs to keep in mind that factors such as human error and system's malfunction may have had a role in the figures presented here. Moreover deaths resulting from lawful attacks of military targets were definitely recorded and some of these were attributable to failure of Hamas' affiliated armed groups to take the necessary precautions in order to protect civilian lives. Nonetheless simply dismissing the scale of civilian fatalities, including around 300 children, as incidental collateral damage or the result of actions taken by terror-struck individual soldiers is fundamentally counterproductive. The data gathered after OCL by independent NGOs and the UN mission consistently illustrated that the largest number of deaths and maiming were the result of attacks which made use of long-range high-precision missiles. This ordinance was delivered from platforms such as combat helicopters, military aircraft and Israeli drones, or from heavy artillery and infantry units or tanks stationed several kilometers away from predetermined targets. This process normally entails approval from up the chain of command and therefore the relative legal responsibility such decisions involve aroused the concern of the international community. Whereas it is an undisputed fact that amid the population density of the Strip that exceeds 1.5 million, long-range precision and even close-range targeting becomes very difficult, it was ultimately in the responsibility of the decision makers to carefully judge the situation and act in accordance.

### **3.6 The Use of Certain Kinds of Weaponry**

The UN mandated fact-finding mission investigated eleven specific incidents in which serious allegations of direct attacks with lethal outcome were carried out against non-combatants in Gaza. Goldstone et al. (2009) argue that in all these cases the facts examined made it apparent that there had not been any justifiable military objective pursued in any of these. In addition during the course of the UN inquiry, knowledge of use of certain weaponry by the Israeli armed forces was determined. According to Goldstone et al. (2009), many of such related issues brought to the UN Mission's attention had already received extensive scrutiny in the press or as a result of analysis carried out by a number of NGOs. Goldstone et al. (2009) point out that these issues included the use of white phosphorous, the use of flechette missiles, the use of dense inert metal explosive (DIME) munitions, and even the use of depleted uranium shells. Furthermore Amnesty International (2009) reported that a number of civilians were also injured or killed by more conventional inaccurate weapons, such as artillery shells and mortars.

However the use of white phosphorus especially aroused widespread criticism directed at the IDF because although it is not a proscribed weapon under international law, as in the case of land mines or mustard gas, its use against human targets is illegal. White phosphorus apart from being a highly incendiary substance emits poisonous fumes whilst burning and continues to do so until the chemical is exhausted or deprived of air.

Artillery rounds and air-to-surface ordinance containing felt wedgies suffused in white phosphorus were fired arbitrarily over highly populated residential areas. Goldstone et al. (2009) assert that this chemical can remain active for up to 21 and 24 days after discharge. Thus the UN Mission concluded that using it over such a densely populated urban area to have amounted to an excessive action relative to the specific military advantages sought. This inference was made because of the unnecessary risks to which the civilian population was exposed and excessive damage to civilian objects in the area under attack. In this regard Goldstone et al. state that:

“The Israeli Government has frequently pointed out the difficulties posed by fighting in built-up areas. One of the difficulties is the proximity of civilian premises to possible military targets. Commanders have no choice but to factor in the risk to such premises and the people inside them in deciding which weapons to use. The Mission finds that the Israeli armed forces were systematically reckless in determining to use white phosphorous in built-up areas and in particular in and around areas of particular importance to civilian health and safety.”

Goldstone et al. (2009) also conclude that notwithstanding the fact that white phosphorus is not banned in warfare, its repeated misuse by the IDF during OCL calls into question the soundness of allowing its continued use without some further degree of control. Moreover Goldstone et al. (2009) admit to the tactical need of employing obscurants and illuminants for strategic reasons during military operations, to screen troops from observation or enemy fire. However the UN report also points out that other screening and illuminating agents exist which are “free from the toxicities, volatilities and hazards that are inherent in the chemical white phosphorous.”

Flechettes are another type of weapon employed by the IDF in OCL and consist of small, dart-like pieces of composite metal that are usually fired in salvo from canister projectiles or shells. Goldstone et al. (2009) explain how flechettes are used in an anti-personnel role and are discharged in such quantities that cover a specific diffused area forward of the canister shell. Therefore it is an area weapon which on impact its darts hit whatever is within a certain zone and thus as a weapon it is inherently incapable of discriminating between objectives after detonation. Consequently Goldstone et al. (2009) posit that such weapons are “particularly unsuitable for use in urban settings where there is reason to believe civilians may be present.” The report done by Goldstone et al. (2009) determined that flechettes were used during the military operations on numerous occasions by tanks and on at least one occasion from an air-to-surface missile. More importantly the report determined that in all these cases those hit by these devices included civilians. Therefore according to Goldstone et al. (2009), “while international humanitarian law does not explicitly prohibit the use of flechettes in all circumstances, the principles of proportionality and precautions necessary in attack render their use illegal.” Moreover weapons such as DIME munitions and depleted uranium shells have both been determined to cause long-term health hazards that do not afford the army that uses them any perceivable military advantage. This statement is especially so in this case where the asymmetry between the conflict parties did not require Israeli forces to employ such ordinance and even more so because of the extremely dense population of Gaza. The UN report that consists of more than 500 pages in length has on several occasions



pointed out to breaches of proportionality on the IDF's part, one of which is illustrated in the following excerpt:

“[...] taking into account the weapons used, and in particular the use of white phosphorous in and around a hospital that the Israeli armed forces knew was not only dealing with scores of injured and wounded but also giving shelter to several hundred civilians, the Mission finds, based on all the information available to it, that in directly striking the hospital and the ambulance depot the Israeli armed forces in these circumstances violated article 18 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and violated customary international law in relation to proportionality.”

One of the facets that struck most deeply the organizations that carried out *prima facie* investigations after OCL was that despite Israeli officials had knowledge of high civilian deaths and wounded after its initial phases, their forces kept on employing the same tactics for the entire duration of OCL with the consequence of causing a growing number of civilian casualties. Such pattern of attacks according to Amnesty International (2009) reflected an element of irresponsible behavior, disregard for civilian lives and property and a consistent failure to distinguish between military targets and civilians and civilian objects. The conclusions of the report by Amnesty International (2009) posit that these attacks were ostensibly tolerated or openly authorized by those up on the Israeli chain of command. Such notion coincides with that proposed by Goldstone et al. (2009) and highlighted in the previous section, whereby agreeing that at certain points the attacks acquired the semblance of being a collective punishment of the local Gazan population for the actions of armed groups. Such a conclusion was drawn from knowledge that Israeli high-precision weaponry (especially missiles) afford their

operators clear vision of even small details of their targets and are capable of accurately disposing of even fast moving targets. Nonetheless such guided missile attacks represented the largest portion of Israeli ordinance used in OCL and resulted in the bulk of civilian deaths (Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, 2009).

### **3.7 Perceptions of Threat among Israelis**

An aspect around OCL's timing is pointed out by Ben Meir (2009) when pointing out that the Israeli government decided to embark upon this military campaign only six weeks before the general Knesset elections. Ben Meir (2009) goes on to explain that this specific factor took Hamas by surprise since its leaders were not expecting such a move with Israeli elections around the corner and the same author states that other commentators including Hamas spokespersons alluded that the timing of OCL was in fact due to the upcoming 2009 elections. Determining such proposition is irrelevant to the current study, however the salient point made by Ben Meir (2009) in this regard is that by initiating OCL at that specific time demonstrated the inclination of the Israeli leadership to take political risks in order to convey a strong message of deterrence. This reflects the proposition made by Avruch (1998) where this author asserts that Israel has a tendency to take such large focused actions in order to avoid future diffused uncertainties and anxieties, a notion that is reflected also in the work of Grossbard (2003).

In this regard the Israeli relationship with its enemies is influenced by its past as a people, by its anxieties and the traumas it endured and from aspects of the group identity as a people that were formulated during Israel's history. The public response to such anxieties is thus shown in Ben Meir's (2009) research where this author states that the decision to embark on this military mission "enjoyed massive support among Israel's Jewish population." Ben Meir (2009) argues that the political risks entailed by OCL proved to have been extensive since from its launch the objectives were limited and were not intended to satisfy all of the public's requirements. Ben Meir (2009) also asserts that before the operation the Israeli public exerted remarkable pressure on its government to act and accordingly it acted in a manner that exuded an impression that it had little choice in the matter, whereas in other cases it has proven that when it wants to, it can endure such pressure. About such mechanism Canetti, Hall, Rapaport & Wayne (2013) argue that public support for use of military force against the out-group becomes intensified among a population living in the context of an intractable conflict that has the potential to inflame previous trauma. Therefore Canetti et al. (2013) argue that:

"[...] such context sets the stage for amplified perceptions of threat that in turn have the potential to shift the political attitudes of civilians exposed to violence against out-group members, triggering greater support for militancy and reduced support for conciliatory policies [...] exposure to political violence fundamentally informs the crystallization of extremist political attitudes towards the conflict and conflict out-group and even in the development of non-democratic attitudes, all in service of reducing the psychological distress and sense of threat triggered by exposure to violent conflict."

Ben Meir (2009) also states that the Israeli public saw OCL as a just war in a double sense: “there was full justification for going to war (the war was seen by all segments of the Jewish population as a war of “no choice”), and the way it was conducted and its use of force were justified.” This perception of having no other option but to resort to war also reflects what Grosbard (2003) implies when arguing about the existence of two different ways of perception that lead to opposing results: “war thinking and peace thinking.” This author holds that war thinking is a sort of thinking nurtured by thoughts of threat. Nonetheless such claims of no choice are shown by Erakat (2009) to have been contradicted by information supplied by the very Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ website according to which:

“[...] there was a significant drop in rocket and mortar fire directly after the ceasefire went into effect and a significant spike immediately after it was broken by Israeli forces on November 4, 2008. In a chart, the MFA prominently demonstrates the ceasefire’s success in diminishing attacks on its citizens. According to the chart, only twenty rockets and eighteen mortar shells were fired from Gaza into Israel during the four months following the implementation of the ceasefire. Significantly, in the single month following Israel’s raid into Gaza that killed six Hamas militants, 203 rockets and 121 mortar shells were fired at Israel. The figures strongly demonstrate that Israel diminished rocket attacks and mortar shellings in a matter of weeks through diplomatic means. Israel was able to bring more protection to its citizens during the four months when it agreed to a ceasefire than it was able to provide in all the months preceding and in the month following the ceasefire when it had used force.”

These figures and arguments iterated by Erakat (2009) demonstrate that the claims of having “no other choice” and of acting in self-defense are in the very least highly debatable and in fact support the current research’s hypotheses. Nevertheless

despite such figures being publicly available on the MFA' website, sweeping public support of the Gaza intervention was still given as the work of Ben Meir (2009) and Yaar & Hermann (2008) demonstrate. However before continuing to illustrate a number of Israeli public surveys that were carried out during OCL, a study of particular importance to the scope of the current research will be explored. This study was carried out by Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal in summer 2008, some months prior to OCL. The study probed Israeli Jewish collective memories and perceptions of the Arab/Israeli conflict in its early stages up to a few months before OCL.

This consisted of a survey based research directed at a representative sample of Jewish Israelis through a quota sampling methodology, in order to probe attitudes and collective memories with regards to the Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict. The 500 participants were asked to respond 24 questions many of which pertinent to the current study as they shed light on the specific psychological barriers that have led to the full public support of OCL and to its corollary damage in Gaza. The results of this survey demonstrate a considerable distortion of the actual historical events as recalled in the collective memory of participants. For example when asked to indicate the reasons for the departure of Palestinian refugees during the 1948 War of Independence, only 8% of those who participated asserted that these refugees were expelled by the Jews. While a considerable portion of the participants (40.8%) held that the Palestinians left out of their own volition, thus adhering with the Zionist narrative that denies even partial expulsion attributable to Jewish action. 39 % of those that participated answered that the refugees

left due to fear, calls from their leaders to leave and Jewish expulsion. While the last 12% responded that they didn't know. Thus adding the 39% and 8% sections gives a majority of 47% that attests to a degree of Israeli responsibility in the initiation of the conflict. However the propensity to adopt the Zionist narrative by a considerable proportion of Israelis is noticeable and conforms to what Volkan (1997) points out as representing a political ideology of exaggerated entitlement, such as irredentism. It has been generally acknowledged that such narratives were disseminated in the years that followed the War of Independence, including the claims that the 800,000 Palestinians that fled had made themselves refugees voluntarily, or in obedience to instructions from other Arab regimes (Brunner, 2002; Zuckerman, 2002, cited in Kemp, 2011).

Moreover the study by Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) found that in general terms the Jewish collective memory is appreciably critical of the role of Israel in the conflict. For example another question enquired the participants to give their opinion on the level of responsibility each side of the conflict had in the outbreak and continuation of the conflict. The result for this question revealed that 46% of those who filled the survey believed that Israel and Arabs/Palestinians have equal responsibility in the matter. By contrast another 43% held onto the Zionist narrative thus primarily putting all the blame on the Arabs/Palestinians and 4% only on the Jews. These results show that the Zionist narrative is somewhat rejected and that the Jewish collective memory is more open to accepting responsibility, be critical of Israeli actions and more self-reflective. However

one cannot deny that in 2008, although probably not strong as it was 30 or 40 years ago, the Zionist narrative is maintained by a considerable portion of those who participated.

It is specifically this section of the population that maintains the negative collective memories of the group and according to Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) reflects the typical trends of societies involved in intractable conflicts, which adopt a collective memory of the conflict that is self-serving and biased to a large degree. Such expressions by the Israeli public results from encounters, in which the presence of the ‘enemy’ in the participants’ subconscious awareness draws from wells of emotion, whereby sensing emotionally loaded subjects, many do not want to confront these and adopt alternative self-serving narratives (Abu Nimer & Lazarus in Kuriansky, 2007). For example another question in Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) sought to probe the perceived source of responsibility for violence between the Jews and Palestinians that occurred in the Land of Israel from the end of the 19th century until the eruption of the War of Independence. The large majority of respondents indicated that such responsibility was only the Palestinians’ (38%) and mostly the Palestinians’ (21%), while only 24% stated that this was equally shared between both parties. In this regard Kane (2005, cited in Kemp, 2011) describes a causal connection between a “necessary blindness to the catastrophic impact of the founders’ own traumatic past’ and a blindness ‘to the equally catastrophic impact of their treatment of the local Arab population.”

Despite such results being encouraging and signal a movement forward towards reconciliation, Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal's (2011) results, also demonstrate that such perceptions are fragile and easily swayed by threat of open conflict in time of crises. The survey by Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) shows that many Israeli Jews still hold a Zionist narrative of many issues in the history of the conflict, that leads to a one-dimensional or simplistic recollection of the conflict. This often portrays Israel in a wholly positive light while the Arab/Palestinian side in a negative one. The following figures are examples of the aforementioned trend extracted from the study by Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) that display the distribution of held collective memories of specific events in the Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict by Jewish Israelis. In all the aspects investigated by Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) the results show a basic bias towards justifying Israeli actions as being necessary and a consistent mistrust and delegitimization of the enemy. The current researcher suggests a careful investigation of the results these questions have elicited as their underlying motivations are consistent with the central premise of the current study, since these results reflect the views of Israelis around the time just before OCL. Therefore these may show a certain level of psychological regression owed to being under shared stress of that particular point in the conflict. Such condition according to Volkan (1997) may lead to falling back on primitive ways of behaving and of perceiving the environment as more dangerous than it is, while expecting others to be more powerful than they are.



Table 1 Source: Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011)

<b>2. To the best of your knowledge, what was the degree of sincerity of Israeli efforts versus those of the Arabs (including the Palestinians) to achieve peace through out the conflict?</b>		
No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	Israel was very sincere but the Arabs were not sincere	27
2	Israel was somewhat sincere and the Arabs not	30.4
3	Both parties were sincere in about an equal degree	28.2
4	The Arabs were somewhat sincere and Israel not	1.6
5	The Arabs were very sincere and Israel not	0.4
6	Do not know	12.4
	Total	100

Table 2 Source: Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011)

<b>5. To the best of your knowledge, who is responsible for the violence between the Jews and Palestinians that occurred in Eretz-Israel from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the eruption of the War of Independence? The source of responsibility for the violence is:</b>		
No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	Only the Palestinians	20.6
2	Mostly the Palestinians	37.8
3	Quite equally both parties	23.8
4	Mostly the Jews	3.6
5	Only the Jews	1.0
6	Do not know	13.2
	Total	100

Table 3 Source: Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011)

<b>7. What portion of the Palestinians wanted to initiate a war against the Jews following the UN resolution of '47 for the establishment of Israel?</b>		
No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	The vast majority of the Palestinians wanted to initiate a war	26.8
2	The majority	33.6
3	About half	9.8
4	A minority	10.6
5	An insignificant minority	1.4
6	Do not know	17.8
	Total	100

Table 4 Source: Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011)

<b>10. What were the main reasons for the entry into Israel of Arab/Palestinian infiltrators between the end of the War of Independence and the beginning of the Sinai War in '56?</b>		
No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	All of them entered with the intent to commit terrorist acts (such as murder and sabotage)	12.4
2	Most of them entered with the intent to commit terrorist acts	20.2
3	About half entered with the intent to commit terrorist acts, while half entered with economic-social aims (such as cultivation of fields and visiting relatives)	32.2
4	Most entered with economic-social aims	12.2
5	All entered with economic-social aims	2
6	Do not know	21
	Total	100

Table 5 Source: Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011)

<b>11. Why did Israel initiate the '56 Sinai War?</b>		
<b>Israel attacked:</b>		
No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	Entirely because it had no other alternatives in response to aggressive actions by the Arabs	28.6
2	Mostly because it had no other alternatives	30
3	Partly because it had no other alternatives and partly because it sought to conquer and control Egyptian territories	14.2
4	Mostly because it sought to conquer and control Egyptian territories	4.6
5	Entirely because it sought to conquer and control territories	1.6
6	Do not know	21
	Total	100

Table 6 Source: Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011)

<b>12. What was Israel's motivation in initiating the '67 Six Day War?</b>		
No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	Solely as a defense measure in response to war threats by Arab countries	37.2
2	Mostly as a defense measure in response to war threats	34.6
3	Partly as a defense measure and partly because it sought to conquer and control Arab territories	12.8
4	Mostly because it sought to conquer and control Egyptian territories	1.6
5	Solely because it sought to conquer and control territories	2
6	Do not know	11.8
	Total	100

Table 7 Source: Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011)

18. What were the primary reasons for eruption of the '87 Intifada?		
No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	Mainly natural hatred towards Israel	23.6
2	Somewhat due to hatred	17.2
3	More or less equally due to hatred and other reasons (such as unwillingness to be controlled and harsh treatment by Israel)	32
4	Somewhat due to other reasons	6.6
5	Mainly due to other reasons	6.4
6	Do not know	14.2
	Total	100

These statistics can be emblemized through the following quote from Volkan (1997) when referring to an Arab/Israeli encounter:

“When the Israeli and Egyptian representatives first met in the United States in January 1980, they began by reciting past injuries inflicted by the other group, as if competing to see who had suffered more. The competition was literal: representatives interrupted one another, refusing even to listen to the other side. Emotions pertaining to recent injurious or humiliating events activated memories of other such incidents from the past, some from centuries before.”

Another cogent position that reflects the results presented by Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) is put forward by Grossbard (2003):

“For years, Palestinian terrorism was nothing but more proof that they wanted to destroy us, which is still partly true, but now as in the past, we find it hard to connect it in our consciousness to the Palestinians’ feelings of frustration and rage over becoming refugees. We denied and repressed the refugee problem for years because we could not deal with it emotionally. *Emotional repression leads to a distorted sense of reality.* That is because we are ignoring important information. We felt threatened, persecuted, and just, so how could we feel the pain of others from that

emotional position? That is the tragedy of the paranoid personality, who grew up in a threatening environment, and who now has trouble adjusting to a less persecuting reality. The repeated blows whose source he does not understand are the price he pays for his distorted sense of reality, that thinking disorder that prevents him from seeing the other as he is and leads him to repress and ignore emotional information that is so important to seeing the whole picture.”

Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) argue that “holding such a Zionist narrative serves as an obstacle to peace since it promotes negative emotions, mistrust, delegitimization and negative stereotypes of Arabs and Palestinians.” According to Abu Nimer & Lazarus (2007) such mechanisms as denial and willful ignorance of the other side are symptoms of confronting psychological defense mechanisms that protect idealized self and dehumanized enemy images. Examples of strong mistrust and negative emotions towards the “other” was shown in Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal’ (2011) study when the participants were asked to indicate the degree of sincerity of Israeli efforts versus those of the Arabs (including the Palestinians) to achieve peace throughout the conflict. 27% answered that Israel was very sincere while the Arabs were not, while 30% stated that Israel was somewhat sincere while the Arabs were not. Around 28% answered that both parties were equally sincere.

Another example from the study by Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011), regarding a more recent event in the peace process, investigated the failure of the peace negotiations of summer 2000, between then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Israeli Jewish participants distinctively took a harder line in explaining the reasons for the failure. The great majority of 56% held that Arafat refused a very

generous peace offer by Barak because he did not want peace with Israel. By contrast there were only 25% who held both parties responsible for the failure and 3% who asserted that only Barak was responsible. Such harsh representation in Israeli collective consciousness is also encountered in the work of Abu Nimer & Lazarus (2007) where they describe that every encounter with the other side becomes an opportunity to establish, once and for all, the guilt of the 'enemy.' As a result Abu Nimer & Lazarus (2007) assert that the majority chooses to adopt narratives of victimhood in a manner reminiscent of a criminal case, in a way to discredit the other.

Ultimately according to Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) their study revealed that older people, especially those of a more religious inclination, to be more likely to hold the Zionist narrative. Furthermore, those of whom who support the Zionist narrative are significantly less prone to support peace agreements with the Palestinians, indicating the important role of collective memory in conflicts. Moreover Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) assert that their study indicates that a strong correlation was shown to exist between Jewish Israeli collective memory of "past Jewish persecution" (concerning anti-Semitism and the Nazi Holocaust) and the analyzed collective memory of the conflict. Volkan (1997) argues that such isolated concerns with one's own group's helplessness and losses and the recitation of past injuries magnify the present perception of threat and danger while also magnifying group identity, which hinges on the apparent need to remain self-centered and focused on prior experiences.

Similarly according to Abu Nimer & Lazarus (2007) Israelis often cite Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians as a means of justifying Israeli actions and root their arguments in Israel's role as a refuge for survivors of the Holocaust and Jews fleeing from persecution in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Furthermore Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) assert that people identifying with a significant memory of Jewish persecution are shown to be much more likely to uphold a Zionist narrative. Such memory of persecution is discussed by Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) as one of the determining factors of Israel's conduct throughout the conflict and this study provides support for its impact. Moreover an in depth empirical study carried out by Halperin & Bar-Tal (2011), supplies an examination of socio-psychological barriers to peace-making within Jewish Israeli society that has as one of its aims to directly probe the chosen trauma narratives of a representative sample of the population (500 individuals). The following excerpt from the aforementioned study iterates the method by which Halperin & Bar-Tal (2011) addressed the issue of chosen trauma to assess its prevalence and societal effects displayed by the sample:

“To assess collective victimhood we used a three-item measure. Following the conceptual and empirical work by Bar-Tal and his colleagues (Bar-Tal et al., 2009), the measure consisted of two items that reflect a general sense of victimhood (i.e. ‘The Holocaust is not a one-time event - it will happen again if we do not protect ourselves’, ‘The history of the Jewish people is characterized by continuous existential threat’) and one item focusing on victimhood that is directly related to the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (‘Throughout the years of the conflict, Israel has been the victim and the Palestinians have been the perpetrators’).”

The results of this study clearly show that belief in the victimhood of the Jewish people is highly and negatively proportional to support for compromises and moderately negatively associated with openness towards the enemy group. Thus persons holding onto historical anxiety, “rightist political orientation, authoritarian personalities, and entity theories about groups’ malleability” both showed inhibition to compromise (in the current study represented by proportionality) and “tend to express higher levels of delegitimization of the opponent and a higher level of collective victimhood” (Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011). The results of this study also demonstrate that peaceful initiatives initiated by the out-group, new information about the humanness of the rival and his suffering or even new information about the in-group’s wrongdoing do not receive proper attention and consideration. In substance Halperin & Bar-Tal (2011) conclude that the sense of collective victimhood is based on continuous perceived harm and it is possible that a major traumatic event to which a group was subjected may become the cornerstone for the construction of a new reality. The more the society experiences harm (especially human losses) in the conflict, the greater the collective sense of being the victim becomes prevalent and entrenched.

The aforementioned studies connect with a series of similar studies carried out by Yaar and Hermann. Here two of these studies shall be expounded in this section, in order to give further pertinence to the premise of the current research i.e. that historical anxieties had a role in the application of proportionality in OCL. The first one was carried out between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2008 and another between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of

January 2009 (one week into OCL). This survey consisted of telephone interviews and that included 598 participants, which represented the adult population of Israel, including the occupied territories and the kibbutzim. Yaar and Hermann investigated the public opinion on two central issues, namely the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and the Arab Peace Initiative first proposed in 2002. Regarding the first issue Yaar & Hermann (2008) found that a solid majority among the Jewish Israeli public of 58% (opposed by 36%) supported the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, and a somewhat larger majority (61% vs. 35%) who saw the Palestinians' claim to an independent state of their own to be justified. Moreover Yaar & Hermann (2008) state that a clear majority of 53% (vs. 38%) also held that "in the framework of a peace agreement with the Palestinians, Israel could allow itself to agree to an independent Palestinian state's creation."

However Yaar & Hermann (2008) argue that such structure of positions amongst the Jewish public is particularly significant and interesting in shedding light on the widespread Jewish Israeli suspicion of Palestinian intentions. One particular response in this survey affirms Nets-Zehngut and Bar-Tal's claims of Jewish mistrust and negative perception with regards to the Palestinians, according to this around two-thirds (63%) showed agreement with the statement that "in reality, most of the Palestinians do not accept the existence of the state of Israel and would destroy it if they could, despite the fact that the PLO leadership is conducting peace negotiations with Israel" (Yaar and Hermann, 2008). Thus this question revealed that while 63% agreed with such statement,



only 20% disagreed, and the rest replied that they were not sure or lacked the knowledge to formulate an answer. Yaar & Hermann (2008) argue that the segmentation of answers to this question with the question on personal opposition or support to establishing an independent Palestinian state show that among those who agree that the Palestinians would eradicate Israel if they could, the rate of those favoring a Palestinian state is lower than among those who disagree with that claim, as expected. However and more importantly, even among those participants who agreed with the proposed statement, a majority of 55% support in fact an independent Palestinian state while 40% oppose it. This shows that in reality even among that sector of Jewish Israeli public which is open to the idea of allowing a Palestinian state to be instituted, deep perceptions of mistrust and anxiety of future threat do subsist. In Yaar & Hermann's (2008) words, "most of the Jewish public is prepared to accept the idea of an independent Palestinian state while, at the same time, assuming that the Palestinians' intentions toward Israel are not to accept its existence but rather to destroy it." This conforms with the argument put forward by Grossbard (2003) whereby this author states that Israelis incur persistent difficulty in seeing the other side and ultimately understanding what it is really going through. Thus according to Grossbard (2003), this lack of understanding consequently leads to an inability to realistically predict future actions in Israel's regard.

Moreover such environment of suspicion, mistrust and apprehension among most Israeli Jews in relation to Palestinian objectives are again confirmed by Yaar & Hermann (2008) when they explain the results to the questions relating with the Arab Peace

Initiative. Yaar & Hermann (2008) started by checking how many of the participants had possessed knowledge of the initiative in the first place. It was shown that only 43% had, as opposed to 55% that had no knowledge of it. Moreover just 12% claimed to have seen the announcements with the main points of the initiative that the Palestinian Authority published two weeks earlier on Israeli media. Yaar & Hermann (2008) then assert to have presented the interviewees such points and asked “whether the Arab states’ declared readiness, as stated in the initiative, to end the conflict and normalize their relations with Israel is an encouraging sign of a profound change in their political outlook.” Yaar & Hermann (2008) argue that a segment of the answers to this question showed that a predominant portion of 54% did not perceive this as a major change, compared to 38% of the Jewish public who agreed that the inclination to end the conflict and stabilize relations indeed attests to such a far-reaching change. A second issue presented to the Jewish Israeli Public by Yaar & Hermann (2008) regarded whether the Israeli government ought or not consider adoption of the Arab Peace Initiative in its original form. Yaar & Hermann (2008) describe how such question was presented to the participants in two versions: to half of the sample, mentioning the fact that the initiative had received open interest from Prime Minister Olmert and President Peres and to the rest of the sample, without mentioning this fact. Yaar & Hermann (2008) stated to have been surprised to learn that the distribution of answers, to both versions of the question resulted to be almost identical. Specifically only about one third of the participants responded that Israel ought to positively consider adopting the initiative, while the majority that was more than half of the interviewees, expressed marked opposition

towards it. Again these results concur with those obtained by Halperin & Bar-Tal, (2011) and reflect Grossbard's (2003) remark: "when an enemy leader makes a statement we often see it as a manipulation or as a declaration that need not be taken seriously, and only seldom do we view it as a painful truth on which that leader cannot compromise, the loss of our ability to listen is the greatest threat to our existence." At this point it should be stated that one ought not conflate the legitimacy of the moderates with the Palestinian leadership with Hamas, however the intrinsic distrust amongst Israelis, pointed out by Grossbard (2003) and Yaar & Hermann (2008), is conducive to estrangement and radicalization within the out-group that in turn sustains the intractability of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2009).

Furthermore the Israeli public's immediate concern with security and anxieties related to all its diverse aspects are also confirmed by Yaar and Hermann (2008) when stating that based on findings elicited from earlier studies carried by the same researchers, it is demonstrable that foreign defense and security issues are the fulcrum on which the Israeli Jewish public weighs which party to vote for.

### **3.8 Israeli Public Support for Operation Cast Lead**

A War and Peace Index survey, also conducted by Yaar & Hermann (2009) about a week and a half after the start of OCL indicates that the intervention, including its diverse aspects, benefited from an overwhelming support from the Israeli Jewish public. This survey also consisted of telephone interviews directed towards a representative

sample (593 participants) of the adult Israeli population. This survey showed that 94% of the public strongly supported or supported OCL. A similar figure is corroborated by Ben Meir (2009) when stating that:

A poll taken the day after the start of the operation<sup>1</sup> showed 81 percent of the Israeli public supporting the operation, with only 12 percent opposed. In light of what we know today about the profound differences of opinion among the Jewish and Arab populations on Operation Cast Lead, it is apparent that the vast majority of those opposed were Israeli Arabs and that the scope of Jewish support for the operation reached 90 percent.

Moreover according to Yaar & Hermann (2009), showed in their research that 92% of Jewish Israelis held that it benefited Israel's security, and a definite majority (albeit relatively smaller) of 62% asserted that the operation helped Israel from a political point of view. According to Yaar & Hermann (2009) 92% also justified the IAF's attacks in Gaza in spite of the damage these caused to infrastructure and the suffering of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip, thus displaying a dismissal and negation of the existence and emotions of the enemy group in response to perceived threat (Grossbard, 2003). These statistics also resonate with what Volkan (1997) argues about when stating that empathy for the suffering of the "enemy" group becomes rare within the in-group and this feeling or rather its lack is coupled by an inability to identify with the anguish of the other. Moreover the previous figures also have foundation in Volkan's argument when he states that in situations when individuals regress because of their identity being threatened shared conscience or a group's morality are also prone to regress to an earlier stage. Volkan (1997) asserts that to be moral means avoiding internal punishment by the

superego and the resultant sense of anxiety. Volkan (1997) continues by stating that when members of a group experience mass regression, their fears are transformed into fear of punishment by the enemy and their shared morality is then modified to focus on minimizing group anxiety. As a result Volkan (1997) states that in this manner the ability to kill the enemy without remorse is created.

Furthermore from Yaar & Hermann's (2009) research, the decision to launch the ground incursion by the IDF into Gaza has enjoyed extensive support and in fact 70% of the participants stated that this was a necessary undertaking. Regarding the question of whether or not Israel ought to continue the campaign, the public (unlike the disagreements pointed out by Yaar and Hermann, among the political leadership) unanimously (90%) expressed the opinion that Israel needed to persist with OCL until all its objectives were achieved. According to Yaar & Hermann (2009) this support went "hand in hand with the large majority's assessments that (70%) the operation had high or moderately high chances of achieving all its objectives and that (75%) the government had a clear plan of action for continuing the operation in Gaza." Also according to Ben Meir (2009) the more OCL progressed, the more certain sectors of Israeli citizenry began to feel that the intervention had fulfilled its goals, nonetheless, the large majority still supported its prolongation. Ben Meir confirms that a poll taken on January 13, 2009 demonstrated that 62% of the Israeli public (equivalent to some 70% of the Jewish population) responded that OCL ought to be continued, in contrast with 26% of the public that supported the ceasefire.

It would seem that such broad public support for sustaining the fighting was considerably bolstered by the public's positive assessment of the IDF's and its fighting capability (93%) and of the southern communities' resilience (87%). Such support for the IDF 2009 was encountered also in Nets-Zehngut and Bar-Tal's (2011) results when investigating the public's perceptions towards the Israeli forces in the context of the larger conflict with regard to its military's moral conduct in warfare.

Table 8 Source: Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011)

<b>19. To what extent did the IDF exhibit moral conduct (refraining from illegal violent activities) during the '87 Intifada? Grade it on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 represents zero moral conduct and 7 represents absolute moral conduct.</b>		
No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	Zero moral conduct	1.4
2	A little moral conduct	2.6
3	More than a little moral conduct	6.6
4	Medium moral conduct	14.2
5	Significant moral conduct	17.8
6	Almost absolute moral conduct	13.4
7	Absolute moral conduct	23.4
8	Do not know	20.6
	Total	100

Table 9 Source: Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011)

<b>24. What was the extent of moral conduct during fighting ("purity of arms") by the Jews throughout the conflict?</b>		
No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	Very high	23
2	High	36.8
3	Medium	28.2
4	Low	4
5	Very low	1.4
6	Do not know	6.6
	Total	100

Furthermore Yaar & Hermann (2009) argue that the public's response when asked the question whether Israel should have stopped at that point or whether it had to carry on with the OCL in the case Hamas showed it was prepared to stop firing on the south of Israel in return for opening the crossings and stopping the blockade on Gaza, 80% responded negatively. Consequently the majority of this sample did hold that Israel needed to continue OCL to fulfill its goals, even in the eventuality that Hamas agreed to an offer of cease-fire. Moreover, a similar majority in Yaar & Hermann's (2009) study showed that the public was of the opinion that Israel ought not have signed any cease-fire agreements with Hamas if this did not include the release of Gilad Shalit, a captive IDF soldier.

In light of the Israeli public's widespread support for OCL and the positive assessments of how it was being run in its first phase, Yaar & Hermann (2009) comment that it was not surprising that the leadership associated with this operation won high levels of confidence, although the distribution of which differed for different prominent public figures. For example at the top of the ladder of public confidence according to this survey there was Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenasi with an 85% rating, since the public regarded the IDF "above" the party-political arena at that point. Ashkenasi confidence rating was then followed by President Shimon Peres and Defense Minister Ehud Barak, both at 62%, and after them came Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Likud opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu, both at 53%. At the bottom rung of this ladder came the Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, who enjoyed just a 44% confidence rating.

### **3.9 Israeli Public Support for Operation Cast Lead after the Ceasefire**

When OCL was drawing to a close the statistical data reveals that there subsisted a consensus among the Israeli public with regards the outcome of the operation. Ben Meir (2009) explains that a poll taken on January 13, 2009 (four days prior to the ceasefire), showed that 78% of the Israeli public felt that “the operation in Gaza was a success,” compared to only 9% that defined it as being “a failure” (13% responded they didn’t know). Furthermore Ben Meir (2009) posits that 82% responded negatively to the question of Israeli disproportionality in OCL or exertion of unnecessary force, in comparison with the 13 % of respondents that answered affirmatively. Ben Meir (2009) argued that within the Jewish Israeli population only a small proportion responded yes. Similarly in another survey conducted roughly at the same time, 82% of respondents rated the military activity as “very good” and 12% rated it “good” (Ben Meir, 2009).

Moreover in another study carried out by Yaar & Hermann (2009) between February 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009 that included 598 interviewees, it was demonstrated that security issues (and thus preoccupation with external threat) had a major role in the subsequent election campaign. Yaar & Hermann (2009) note that among the Israeli public as a whole in 2009 after OCL, “43% defined themselves as Right, 26% as Center, and 20% as Left; the rest do not know.” As a result the composition of the next government leaned more towards the right-wing of the political spectrum.



Moreover a month after the end of OCL, the entire Israeli public's assessment of its results are shown by Yaar & Hermann (2009) to have been divided almost equally between those who claimed to have been disappointed (33%) and the satisfied (36%), while the rest (29%) either in between or not knowing. Although according to this study the Jewish public clearly evidenced a lead for the satisfied: 39% versus 25% who were dissatisfied, while the rest had no clear opinion on the matter. Yaar & Hermann (2009) argue that this dissatisfaction had stemmed "mainly from the majority's opinion (56% of the entire public and 66% of the Jewish public) that Israel should have continued the operation until Hamas surrendered rather than give in to the international pressure to stop the fighting." Thus, in the public as a whole, 22% (24% of the Jewish public) thought the operation was ended in time and 15% thought it should have been ended earlier (6% of the Jewish public thought so).

One last study carried out by Yaar & Hermann (2009) that has bearing on the current research was conducted between March 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009 and targeted a representative sample of 595 of the adult Israeli population. This study was carried out after the publication of 52 testimonies by IDF soldiers who took part in OCL. These testimonies were published by an Israeli NGO called Breaking The Silence and the testimonies descriptively illustrated how, under orders, IDF forces harmed civilians and structures beyond what was required by the fighting. Consequently these testimonies were largely confirmed by the UN fact-finding mission and by other reports by international NGOs. Thus Yaar & Hermann (2009) checked the public's degree of trust

with regard to these testimonies and its stance on the question of what course should be taken in the case the IDF's investigation verified them. As Yaar & Hermann (2009) reportedly expected the majority of the Jewish public (64%) discounted such testimonies and held that even if the subsequent IDF investigation verified them, neither the soldiers nor the commanders had to be put on trial. The responses showed greater leniency towards the soldiers who carried out the orders, with 74% of the participants stating that these should not be put on trial while only 58% gave the same response regarding the commanders that issued orders. In a poll illustrated by Ben Meir (2009) that was taken the day after the Israeli unilateral ceasefire began, 36% stated that they were in favor of the ceasefire while 50% did not support it and a remaining 14% responded they didn't know. In addition Ben Meir (2009) displays surveys which were published around a week after the establishment of the ceasefire and these asked: "should the operation have been halted or should the entire Gaza Strip have been conquered?" 48% of the respondents agreed that conquering the whole Gaza Strip was the best option versus 44% who responded that halting the operation had been their preferred outcome.

"War as a defense mechanism unites the whole nation, so that we don't have to see ourselves as the conflicted human mosaic we are, Arabs and Jews, religious and secular, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, left and right, men and women, and so on. The army is surely a melting pot for some of the population, and in a state of peace those gaps will surface in even starker relief. [...] Indeed, the common external enemy unites us. And with the peace process moving forward, we can see the rifts between religious and secular and Jews and Israeli Arabs coming to a head"(Grossbard, 2003).

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter will consist of the analytical part of the study. This will deal with twelve selected texts promulgated by Israeli officials during the course of OCL, which will be analyzed and discussed in separate sections. Consequently extracts directly pertinent to the scope of this study shall be reviewed and analyzed in relation to the hypotheses of the study. Furthermore wherever phrases or words are presented between quotation marks it signifies that actual parts of the texts are being used in the analysis. In some cases direct excerpts will be presented in order to highlight certain aspects in the text. However before starting to probe the proportionality of OCL this initial section will provide several examples of explicit chosen trauma references that subsisted around the time of OCL and concur with the Zionist narratives, held amongst a large proportion (43%) of the Israeli population highlighted by Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) in the previous chapter. This shall be done here since such explicit display of chosen trauma is expected to be veiled in the official MFA texts, in which such concept shall transpire as indicator of trauma through less overt statements.

Former opposition leader and now Prime Minister (PM) Benjamin Netanyahu, who's views during OCL won 53% confidence ratings amongst the population (Yaar & Hermann, 2009), has displayed direct chosen trauma notions that serves as an example of Volkan's explanation of former trauma being employed to describe a current threat. For instance Netanyahu has been reported by Weissman (2006) in the prominent Israeli media outlet Haaretz to have likened Hamas' ascent to power in Gaza after the Disengagement Plan, to the Nazi rise to power in the 1930s. A thorough historical study of such depictions in Israeli public discourse applied to enemies is given by Yurman (2008). Weissman (2006) quotes Netanyahu talking about Hamas publicly stating that:

“A few days ago, a **new foe** arose [...] When **Hitler** rose to power, it was said that being in power would moderate him, and it was also said in regards to the ayatollahs' regime and the Taliban. There are urgent warning signs that scream out a lust for murder and destruction.”

This statement conforms with Volkan (1997) when holding that images of former victimizers may become transposed on new enemies, in this case the Nazis ascent is likened to Hamas' that Netanyahu asserts as foreshadowing murder and destruction. Such narrative of anxiety about extermination and the Holocaust amongst present-day Israelis was found in the studies by Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011), Halperin & Bar-Tal (2011) as well as Yaar & Hermann (2008). In another instance after Netanyahu's Likud became the governing party, Netanyahu as Israel's PM addressed the UN General Assembly (Washington Times, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009) where he again compares Hamas to the Nazis and its rocket barrages to the London rocket Blitz, furthermore on various instances he

makes use of Holocaust references to impart his point of brewing danger especially in regards to Iran, who supplied Hamas with rockets. Netanyahu states this after emphatically protesting that the UN had consistently ignored Israel's plight until action had to be taken:

“Well, finally, after eight years of this **unremitting assault**, Israel was forced to respond - but **how** should we have responded? Well, there's only one example in history of thousands of rockets being fired on a country's civilian population. This happened when the **Nazis rocketed** British cities during World War II.”

In response to this statement about such historical anxieties and references made by Netanyahu, Hoffman (2009) reports former Foreign Minister Livni critically stating:

“We have to be careful not to encourage the world to think that Israel was established because of the Holocaust. [...] It is wrong to compare any event in history to the **Holocaust**, because it minimizes the most horrible historic event that happened to the Jewish people. It also makes Israeli citizens feel **less secure**.”

A display of ongoing mourning process in Israel is represented by the Holocaust Remembrance Day on which anniversary shortly after OCL in April 2009, President Peres was quoted by The Jerusalem Post (2009) displaying a direct example of historical anxiety:

“Criticism of the Jewish state is also tinged with chilling anti-Semitism. Among those who collaborated with the Nazis, and those who stood by and let the Holocaust happen, there are those who criticize the one state that rose to grant refuge to Holocaust survivors. The one state that will

prevent another Holocaust. [...] Anti-Semitism is not a Jewish disease, and its cure is incumbent upon those who perpetrate it, [...] We have learned that our spiritual heritage is dependent on physical security. A people which lost a third of its members, a third of its children to the Holocaust, does not forget, and must not be caught off-guard.”

Moreover on the same occasion The Jerusalem Post (2009) reported Netanyahu exhibiting similar discourse that portrays Israel’s situation as a one of heightened anxiety:

“We will not let the Holocaust deniers perpetrate another holocaust on the Jewish people, [...] This is the highest responsibility of the State of Israel and of myself as prime minister. [...] Israel is the shield and the hope of the Jewish People. Here we create for the glory of our people and all of mankind. The country's achievements in every field - culture and science, medicine and security - are groundbreaking. We are a nation small in number but of great fortitude.”

Another example of Israeli trauma is portrayed by president Peres where shortly after OCL in 2009 in a television interview (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, 2009) he was asked whether he would call himself a Zionist, to which he responded:

"It depends what you mean with Zionism. The Jews asked themselves, why are we Jews? Hated, discriminated, suffering from anti-Semitism [...] it's a legal question. There were two Jewish answers. One said we have to change the world, so there won't be discrimination, and that created communism and socialism. They say let's have a world without religion, without classes, without nations, so the Jews won't be a nation too and won't be hated. The other was let's change the Jewish life, not to live upon the mercy of other people but to go back to our homeland, return to our language, live on our values. Zionism is the other choice."

Peres is later asked whether Israel is ready to negotiate for withdrawal from the West Bank, to which Peres replies that the same thing that happened in Gaza, i.e.

becoming a Hamas base hosting attacks towards Israel, is bound to happen in the West Bank, if Israel leaves because the Palestinian Authority is still weak. Then he reproduces the Zionist narrative also encountered in the public's views that the Palestinians, left out of their own accord by stating "we are not going to commit suicide, because they ran away. I was there sitting with Ben-Gurion and we bagged them not to run away." Such articulation of the Zionist narrative is informed by the unconscious processes Volkan (1997) calls "irredentist ideologies", which are often "characterized by the dream of regaining all the lands that the group considered "lost" and now occupied by others." These in turn lead to an exaggerated sense of entitlement that provides a belief system and a renewed sense of omnipotence that asserts that the large group has a right to act in a certain manner in a determinate circumstance (Volkan, 2009). Moreover Peres points out to all the wars Israel was involved in as historical markers to justify the attack on Gaza by stating:

"I don't know of any other country that in sixty years has had to go through seven wars [emphasis stressed], that were initiated against us, and two Intifadas, and shooting blindly against our children and schools. Who did it? Who experienced it? Give me one country and they will be our judge."

Finally a clear illustration linking both historical trauma and the proportionality that was eventually applied to counter Hamas' attacks, was reported by The Guardian (2008) quoting former deputy Defense Minister Vilnai asserting:

“The more Qassam fire intensifies and the rockets reach a longer range, [the Palestinians] will bring upon themselves a bigger **shoah** because we will use **all our might** to defend ourselves, [...] We're getting close to using **our full strength**. Until now, we've used a small percentage of the army's power because of the nature of the territory.”

Consequently in the light of these examples, it is such narratives that shall be sought for in the current analysis, for the purpose of ascertaining the validity of the research query.

## 4.2 Text 1

**December 27, 2008. PM Olmert press briefing on the IDF operation in Gaza**  
(Translated from Hebrew).

For approximately seven years, hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens in the south have been **suffering** from missiles being fired at them. Life in the south under missile barrages had become **unbearable**. Israel did everything in its power to fulfill the conditions of the **calm** in the south and enable **normal life** for its citizens in the communities adjacent to the Gaza Strip. The **quiet** that we offered **was met with shelling**.

From the opening of this briefing one can denote that the PM is imparting to the listening Israeli public a sense of plight that has been endured by thousands of Israelis on a daily basis for seven years. This is especially noticeable by the use of the terms “suffering” and “unbearable”. The “citizens in the south” are referred to here as the innocent helpless victims of violence, which projects and echoes past collective



victimization of the Jewish people albeit not explicitly. Thus the PM is stating that this suffering or what it is really being implied, terror, at the hand of an assailant force, had been endured for long enough and now Israel needs to act. The speech then elevates Israeli identity of magnanimity and working for peace, meaning as it has always done since the formation of the state. Hence one is imparted the schema that whenever the Israeli state has entered a conflict it was the result of being forced by outside threat to its integrity and thus its very identity. Then the PM asserts that the generosity offered by Israel's Disengagement Plan was met by victimization, by interjecting positively charged terms like "calm", "normal life" and "quiet", with "was met by "shelling" and thus terrorization.

No country can **countenance** such a **reality**, The lives of our citizens are not **forfeit**. In recent days, it became clear that Hamas is **bent on conflict**. Whoever heard Hamas's statements understood that they decided to increase **attacks** on the residents of Israel by firing rockets and mortars **indiscriminately**. In such a situation we had no alternative but to respond. **We do not rejoice** in battle but neither will we be **deterred** from it.

Then the PM starts by saying that no other country, and therefore LG, can "countenance", which is an archaic word for understanding and come to bare the burden or tolerate what Israel has sustained, thus again reaffirming the sense of great anxiety in the context of past hostility faced by Israel as a people. This may be taken in the context of chosen trauma as meaning that no other people can understand better the Israeli current situation or "reality" of continued hostility and threat to its way of life and identity (as in Peres' April 2009, interview discussed earlier) The term "forfeit" or being penalized

unjustly, here is being used in relation to all of the citizenry of Israel, thus calling upon a feeling of unity in the face of injustice that as a consequence requires action. One can notice the demonization of the adversary with the use of negative markers in the speech such as “bent on conflict”, “attacks”, “indiscriminately” and future intention to escalate (perceived anxiety projected into the future, Volkan, 1997). However “indiscriminately” here is used to show the discriminate nature of Hamas’ attacks, and implies deliberate targeting of civilians specifically. Therefore the situation is being iterated as requiring a defensive response. This portrays Hamas as being an irrational party, being warmongering and savage, that besides having no actual concrete motive to target Israelis, has not the courage to face the Israeli military. Hence also this calls onto a differentiation between ‘them’ as villains and ‘us’ as the group that has had enough patience and will not tolerate victimization any longer. Moreover the PM asserts that such feelings of uncertainty caused by Hamas will not however “deter” an Israeli action since now it has the means and determination to respond with force. However “we do not rejoice” expresses the sentiment of having been forced to intervene militarily, again subtly articulating just action and proportionality. Thus such response is being qualified as just and aiming to defend the Israeli identity that is at stake if not taken. This can be seen as a call to righteous anger that has led Israel to take on a violent action only as last resort to preserve its right to exist.

Moreover in this speech Olmert explains that the preparations for the “operation” have been “extensive” and “thorough.” However such statement is then followed by the

assertion that its course “is liable to take time” and calls for all Israelis to be “patient,” therefore tolerate the current precarious situation a while longer as they have already done in the last years. This juxtaposition of terminology that can be interpreted in a clinical sense can be taken as the threatened identity of Israel through fear and terror needs swift action, but such action might be time consuming for it to have long-lasting effects. Hence this is calling for all Israelis to be united and back their leadership and military so that the “mission” can be successfully completed. Such assertions have direct underpinnings in Volkan’s observations that in time of crises, groups sharing the same identity regress into a state of anxiety oriented towards the future and feel the need to bind around the leaders or those leaders that will resolve the state of anxiety. This consolidated approval is what the PM’s speech seems to be evoking.

**We want to restore the quiet and the tranquility and give the residents of the south the ability to live the normal lives that every country provides its citizens.**

Again here the Israeli PM is using “quiet”, “tranquility” and “normal lives” the victims “of the south” once had and have now lost. This loss needs to be remedied and restored as has have previous losses (traumas) been amended for through the institution of the Israeli state. Also this segment is emphasizing that it is the duty of every “country” and thus its leaderships’ duty, which is the repository of the LG identity in time of crises, to restore “normal” life. Therefore if Israeli identity is taken to be embedded with notions of repeated victimization as argued in the previous chapter, being antagonized and

entering conflict becomes the normalcy of the collective group consciousness in order to maintain that identity (Volkan, 1997).

This briefing is carried on by outlining the Israeli casualties sustained during the crises by using words like “regret”, “killed”, “wounded” and again “suffering” in the same sentence, followed by the assertion of the leadership’s great investment into preparing for the eventuality of such a “conflict.” Here Olmert calls again to “fully comply” with the security forces. In Volkan’s (2006) terminology the PM is calling for the rest of the group to rally around the leadership. This is followed by what may be understood as a precaution to internal division within the Israeli collective identity by clearly differentiating between where the real danger i.e. Hamas ends and fantasized danger begins. This is done by stating that the population of Gaza need not fear and will not be punished for what Hamas is perpetrating. Thus such statement establishes that Israel as the in-group does not resemble the enemy group in its actions as it is not intent on curtailing or infringing the human rights of the non-combatant population in Gaza. The PM states that a “humanitarian crises” would be avoided at all costs. This statement serves the purpose to limit shared anger erupting from feeling acute concern with the current situation whilst being attacked, and channeling it towards the legitimization of leadership. At the same time this strips the potential for such claims from the enemy by labeling them “terrorist” and bringers of “disaster.”

**Residents of Gaza**, we are not your enemies and we are not fighting against you. This **terrorist** organization has **brought disaster** to two peoples. Israel is not fighting the **Palestinian people** but the **Hamas terrorist** organization that has **taken it upon itself** to act against the residents of Israel. Therefore, the targets that were attacked today were selected accordingly, with stress being placed on avoiding harm to innocents.

Olmert stresses that the operation is not directed at the “innocents” among the “Palestinian people” but towards the irrational enemy “that has taken upon itself” to victimize Israelis. Hence blame for anything that might be incurred by innocents is shrugged onto the unreasonableness of Hamas’ terror. This shift of guilt or denial according to Volkan’s theory is also a symptom of chosen trauma that desensitizes a LG to the suffering of others and acts as justifier. In his rhetoric PM Olmert repeatedly mentions “residents of Gaza” or “Palestinian people” seemingly in a way to demonstrate Israeli resolve towards peace as intrinsic to its identity and sensitivity in their regard. Therefore it is almost as asserting that not only Israelis need this operation for the sake of their survival (and thus identity preservation) but also that the people of Gaza ought to see the operation as a beneficent deed as its outcome would be the removal of Hamas which threatens them as well. Such argument is confirmed by the negative quality appointed to the “Hamas terrorist” posed right after the positive value given by “Palestinian people.” One can quickly observe that this sort of rhetoric is circular since violence, as strategic as it might be, will lead to further retortion and enemy creation thus feeding estrangement towards the other group and sustaining siege mentality.

Our precise intelligence, from the IDF Intelligence Branch and the Israel Security Agency, enabled **maximum** strikes at those involved in **terrorism** and **minimized** harm to **innocents**. This is how we will act in the **future**, as may be **necessary**. Israel is currently focusing on striking at the **terrorist** organizations that are **operating to undermine** stability in the entire region. **I hope that** no other **element** in the region will think that while Israel is fighting in the south, that it is inattentive to what is happening in other areas. We will not hesitate to respond to any **aggression** against **us**.

Again one can observe from this passage in the PM's briefing the juxtaposition of the oppositely charged words "terrorist" and "innocents", where those that are labeled with the former are to be punished with "maximum" power afforded by the precision of Israeli intelligence. Such statement presupposes that the emergence of such precision and might has been the necessary result from past inattentiveness that led to victimization, humiliation and shame. Therefore any step taken here and in the future is to be considered "necessary" if it entails the preservation of this identity of fortitude in the face of adversity. Moreover this enemy is "operating to undermine" stability of the whole Middle East, which again implies the irrational nature being ascribed to Hamas as engaging in terror purely for the sake of terror, thus precluding any of their motives from the discourse. Olmert states that the region is unstable because of the "terrorist" "element" that is portrayed as undermining the whole region. This marker "element" again is used in a pejorative sense here to imply that 'they' are the problem in there region. At the same time "I hope that" displays of projection of future uncertainty and anxiety, followed by threats to answer "aggression" with aggression appears again. However the magnifying effect of backlogged trauma has the effect of distorting and magnifying the perception of threat and its portrayal.

During the day, **we spoke** with the **leaders of the main countries of the world** and made it very clear that the **situation** cannot continue and that we were **compelled** to take action in order to **halt the aggression** against our citizens. We also made it clear that Israel will, at the same time, make every **effort to prevent** a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

The section above ushers the imminent conclusion of the briefing as Olmert states to the listeners that the Israeli leadership has a voice that counts within the international community by saying “we spoke.” The dialogue thus involves “leaders of the main countries of the world,” therefore reaffirming Israel as a state and a people, as the legitimate party in the conflict since its heads of state have the right of audience among those countries that count and thus support Israel. The PM uses the word “situation” matter-of-factly hence again stressing the suffering of Israel that is now being addressed to the rest of the free world. Here the word “Compelled” imparts the feeling that action will have to be taken with compunction but to “halt the aggression” has become mandatory because Israelis do not deserve such treatment especially after a long period of tolerance. The phrase “effort to prevent” is already positing that despite taking every precaution to avoid unnecessary suffering the enemy will be the party responsible of causing such crises if one arises. Following this tread in the discourse one may posit that cessation of the implied victimization by Hamas would override the level of proportionality applied but all this while reasserting the justness and need for the intervention. Moreover the Israeli PM continues by mentioning a few Israeli victims of



Hamas' attacks and yet again asserting that such cases are the source of heightened anxiety among the citizenry.

I **call** on the **entire** Israeli public to unite **around** the IDF operation and certainly appreciate the statements that have been issued this evening by opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who expressed support for Israel's initiative [...]. This is the time for all of us to unite in order to defend the **residents of the south** and the Government seeks to continue working on the basis of a broad national consensus in order to **change the situation** in the south of the country. All ministers and parties in the Government will give the defense establishment all the time that is necessary to carry out the mission with which it has been charged.

Again noteworthy in this last passage from Olmert's speech is the effort put into constructing a sense of unity under a single Israeli banner in support of the IDF. The use of the words "call", "entire" and "around" easily bring to mind the tent metaphor explained in a previous section (Volkan, 1997). The PM is calling for all Israelis to act as one cohesive group in this time of crises. By "entire" Olmert is positing that during such time the sole identity all citizens must give priority to is that of the national identity notwithstanding which political, social, religious or ethnicity, individuals ascribe to. This calls factionalized Israelis to unify under one identity and indirectly also alludes to the approximately 20% Arab-Israelis that Olmert is exhorting to back the government's just action. Furthermore the unity of Israel guaranties protection of "residents of the south", again an indirect reference to "the people of Gaza" that necessitate rescuing from the terrorizing "element". One may go as far as to assert that such discourse represents an effort to rationalize the war and its proportional nature through a symbolic unanimous



vote, framed by prudence and justness avowed by continued subjection to terror. Thus in turn the war is portrayed as the only means of “changing the situation.”

### 4.3 Text 2

**December 28, 2008. President Shimon Peres on IDF operation in Gaza.**

This next statement that was released by the President of Israel, will be analyzed and compared to the previous one to assess similarity in the discourse that was promulgated. Only the most salient passages and thus those that are deemed more relevant to the purpose of this research shall be quoted while other passages containing themes that are common to those in the previous one will be omitted so as not to allow this analysis to become overly repetitive. However congruencies in the discourses need to be pointed out since this represents part of the study’s aim, laid out in the methodology chapter when explaining synchronic and diachronic elements in discourse.

**It is the first time in the history of Israel that we, the Israelis, cannot understand the motives or the purposes of the ones who are shooting at us. It is the most unreasonable war, done by the most unreasonable warriors.**

From the start of this statement by President Peres one is able to denote that it aims to not allow the enemy to be seen as having any just motivation for its continued missile and mortar barrage. The opening phrase “first time in history” is a clear

encouragement by the orator to the listener to recall and acknowledge that Israel has had a long history being antagonized and attacked. Peres like Olmert in the previous press release, is using “we” in a manner that emphasizes the dichotomy between “us” as legitimate party and “them” the criminal party that lacks “motives” and “purposes.” Therefore again this entails the intrinsic irrationality that is being assigned to Hamas. Further more if one is to dig deeper in to the broader contest “the first time in history” is being used in relation to the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. This represents the point at which the Jewish ethnic identity as a people could be consolidated as national identity through Israel as its first line of defense against becoming targets in foreign lands. Furthermore the first time in Israeli history of experiencing unmotivated and purposeless violence is indirectly positing that prior to the existence of Israel, violence lacking “motives” and “purposes” has already been experienced by preceding Jewish populations. Hence generational transmission of the sentiment of being victims of perverse actors such as the Nazis is inferable. Therefore from this first sentence a subtle allusion to chosen trauma and the enhancement of a shared feeling of victimhood can be discerned. “Unreasonable war” and “most unreasonable warriors” are used here in the same sentence to stress again the total lack of coherence in the persistent attacks of Hamas. This is similar to Olmert’s active deligitimisation of Hamas because of its war-mongering character. “Most unreasonable warriors” also equates with terrorist, and this tread in the discourse is continued in the next part of Peres’ statement.

The story is **simple**. Israel has left Gaza completely, out of our own free will, at a **high cost**. In Gaza there is no single Israeli civilian or soldier. They were evacuated from Gaza, our settlements, which called for a very **expensive cost**. [...] Still I have not heard until now a single person who could **explain** to us **reasonably**: **why** are they firing rockets against Israel? What are the **reasons**? What is the **purpose**?

Again Peres like Olmert by using the word “simple” thusly posited emphasizes the unequivocal nature of the situation where the goodwill and actions of Israel have been answered with terrorism and therefore of having been forced to act. Moreover Peres like Olmert refers to the Gaza disengagement of 2005 begrudgingly stressing repeatedly the “high cost” and “expensive cost,” which apart from its direct material association, impart a subtext of psychological cost or loss (as seen in Halkin, 2005) of those Israelis who were forced abandon land that those of religious inclination consider holy, only to realize that such effort to move toward peace was met by terror. Here again one can see how words like “explain”, “reasonably”, “reasons” and “purpose” impart the same feeling of unwarranted suffering that invokes the victimhood identity that is part of Jewish culture discussed by Grossbard (2003), Bar-Tal (2007) and Volkan (1997) . Such feelings than become an exaggerated attitude of entitlement to a reflexive just desert (Volkan, 2004). The feeling of incredulity to terror is being articulated here by Peres by expressing Hamas’ denial of Israeli identity through its indiscriminate attacks. A “why” implies a ‘because’ as a reply, but Peres argues that there isn’t one and in consequence the association to be made is of course one of pointlessness and gratuitous violence again.

**[...] the Palestinians** asked for a ceasefire, and we agreed. They **themselves** have **violated** the ceasefire. Again, we didn't know why, until it came to a point where **we** were left **without a choice** but to **bring an end** to it.

Peres continues with an argument that largely reflects the previous briefing by PM Olmert by using words like “restraint”, “unity” and “waited.” These bestow the sense of collective accord of the Israeli people around its military and leadership while showing exceptional endurance during a situation of heightening anxiety. However unlike Olmert’s speech, Peres refers to “the Palestinians” in general rather than asserting that the real enemy is Hamas. The assertion that “they themselves” again enhances the sense of ‘weness’, this time nonetheless vis-à-vis “the Palestinians” that in this manner are made to look as uniformly being in support of what Hamas is doing. Therefore by association this passage is labeling “the Palestinians” as being irrational by first requesting the ceasefire only to breach it “themselves.” Moreover the usage of “without a choice” and the repeating “bring an end” is not just implying the current situation of the barrages coming from Gaza but more importantly to address concerns around the divisive turn-out from periods of calm afforded by Israel.

Hence one may denote anxiety for an uncertain future where troughs of peace are used by enemies to rearm for their next spike of violence. It is this perpetual oscillation in the conflict that Peres seems to be intent of addressing as having come to the point that no other solution but an unyielding military incursion may stop the Israelis from continuing to be targets. Consequently such argument is positively assuming that the

situation if left unchecked is bound to escalate to the point where Israel in its entirety would become within reach of terrorist violence. Furthermore the use of the wording “the Palestinians” in conjunction to negative markers such as “violated” and “unreasonable warriors” indicates desensitization from the Israeli perspective in regards to the whole Palestinian population. When looking at such narrative present in this discourse through Volkan’s theory one can assert that Peres in this passage is indicating an inability of Israelis to being able to affirm themselves politically during the current situation. When such conditions occur within a LG that has had previous issues of unresolved trauma may internalize the notion of helpless rage that in Volkan’s (2004) conduce to “idealizing masochism, or becoming prone to maladaptive sadistic outbursts.”

The **operation** was planned **carefully** and the army was **true to its principles**: namely, to be **precise** in its targets and **careful** not to hit civilian life. There is a problem because many of the **bombs** were stored in private houses. We have contacted the owners of the houses, the people that dwell there, and told them leave it. You can't live with **bombs**. **We** have to **bring an end** to the source of the **bombs**.

Peres like Olmert lauds the precautionary planning of Israeli officials where he uses “operation”, “carefully”, “precise”, “careful” and “true to its principles” in order to impart an assurance of upstanding moral conduct and of being responsible. Here one can perceive some level of identity construction with regards to the army. The principles being implied here are those of necessity, distinction, humanity and proportionality, and are confirmed as being avowed characteristics of the Israeli military. Proportionality is especially implied when stating that care would be exercised not to cause excessive

civilian harm and entailing the reasonableness of their military command. This leads the target audience to conclude that by virtue of possessing the aforementioned qualities Israel is both fully capable of judging the unavoidability of war and carrying it war successfully.

Right after such assertion Peres shifts the load of moral responsibility on the enemy, thus admonishing that because of the necessity of the intervention and safety measures taken to protect civilians any collateral damage is the enemy's responsibility. Also of notice is the peculiar triple use of the word "bombs" to refer to the rockets and mortars being used by Hamas. "Bombs" instills a grater sense of panic in the listener and again shifts the attention away from the bombs or sort of weaponry used by the Israeli armed forces.

Israel doesn't have any ambition in Gaza. We **left** out of our free choice. We have never gone back to the idea of **returning** to Gaza. It's over. But we cannot permit that Gaza **will become a permanent** base of **threatening** and even **killing** children and **innocent** people in Israel for **God knows why**. I feel that in **our hearts**, we don't have any **hatred** for the **Gazan people**. **Their suffering** doesn't carry any joy in **our hearts**.

The speech then carries on by asserting the disinterest of Israel in occupying Gaza in the future but words like "left" and not "returning" expresses a certain amount of regret or guilt for not foreseeing the eventuality of the current situation and for having Israeli citizens being uprooted and targeted for "God knows why". This last remark portrays a religiously tinged exhortation that carries a great deal of uncertainty about

unacknowledged identity by the enemy, which is coupled with the certainty of future Israeli suffering at the hand of terrorists, in the usage of “will become”, “permanent”, “threatening”, “killing” in relation to “innocent”. However this combination of terms is then followed by emotionally charged terminology such as “our hearts”, “[no] hatred”, “Gazan people” and “their suffering” which also suggest innocence. Peres then carries on by asserting that only by stopping Hamas can normalcy be regained and Israel not being required to intervene or to “participate” in Gaza’s governance, which other countries have also dubbed blatant occupation (Kattan, 2009, Solomon, 2009).

**As a nation, we feel united. As a nation, there is wholehearted support for the army, the way they handled it, their restraint, their discrimination, and their responsibility. The great winner can be reason, and reason will lead to peace. [...] This is the story, and whoever asks us to stop shooting - they have to change the address. Let them turn to Hamas and ask them to stop shooting, and there won't be shooting.**

In the final passage from Peres Israel is referred to with terms such as “nation”, “united” and “wholehearted support.” These appellatives resonate with Olmert’s previous speech by promulgating the Israeli shared or common experience and identity, as being a cohesive one. Also it is being expressed that Israel is advantaged over its enemy because it possesses “reason” that will conduce Israel to prevail in the end and no mention of overwhelming fire power is ever made. Furthermore “handed”, “restraint”, “discrimination”, “responsibility”, “reason” and “peace” are all positive value markers that are meant to describe the war and its assured result “peace.” Conversely the subtext

is that the respective antonyms are to be expressed in regards to the unreasonableness of Hamas, and yet again by using the Manichean dualism of “us” and “them.”

Such contrast of identities emerges from the terminology used which achieves similar argumentative results as that present in Olmert’s briefing. Nonetheless Peres adds the claim of Gazian subjugation in his speech, that has the purpose of positively validating and warranting the use of force on the enemy; Hamas. Ultimately according to such argument the product of this war would also include a possible net gain of freedom and rights for the people of Gaza, apart from guaranteeing long-lasting peace for Israel.

#### **4.4 Text 3**

**December 28, 2008. Briefing to the Diplomatic Corps by Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni in Sderot (south of Israel).**

As in the case of the previous two texts analyzed, the current one opens by addressing and putting emphasis on the “situation” that has disrupted Israelis living in the area adjacent to Gaza. However this address By Minister Livni adds to the sense of collective victimization the international dimension, owed to the fact that Livni was addressing Israelis and foreign ambassadors. Livni asserts that the predicament of the citizenry in the south is being ignored by the international community and that the only times Israel gets “some sympathy” is when it is under attack. Such statement in some



measure evokes in Israelis the memories of when Jewish communities in Europe were ignored by the rest of the world. The fact that Livni is addressing this speech from Sderot, which was within Hamas's range of fire, bolsters the feeling of being under attack and therefore makes the secondary identity of being Israeli to become suddenly more important in the listener. She goes on to state that sharing the suffering and hence profound anxiety and state of terror, of Israeli citizens is not enough, in consequence it is the responsibility of the Israeli government to intercede militarily. Moreover Livni wants to clarify what looks like she is presenting as being the basic truth and reason why Israel is in the right.

There is no need - **although** maybe there is - to **remind everybody** that Israel **left** the Gaza Strip a few years ago. **We dismantled** all of the settlements in the Gaza Strip and **we took** our forces out, in order to create a vision of **peace**.

This passage in Livni's speech is a direct referral to the condition of Israel being the righteous entitled party because it did everything in its power to work towards "peace." How the word "although" is being used indicates that emphasis on previous loss owed to Israeli good will or inattentiveness. Furthermore emphasis being made with "remind everybody," immediately point alert painful memories of the Disengagement that "everybody" shares in the Israeli group. "Left," "we dismantled," and "we took," as in the case of Peres' speech, indicates a sense of loss and unforeseen consequences incurred for letting such loss take place. From a Zionist perspective this evokes the irredentist ideology that Volkan (2006) talks of. The next part of this passage contrast the

Israeli vision of “peace” with the image of the terrorist that the phrases “took control” and “is controlled,” beget the same entitlement and justification to action because of being wronged by the enemy. Thus the thwarting of a peaceful vision indeed again dichotomizes the situation into ‘them’ bad and ‘us’ good. The same discrediting speech also occurs in Livni’s discourse when she addresses Hamas as a “terrorist organization” and having an “extreme” ideology, through which such individuals are unable to accept the “right of Israel to exist.” Therefore when combining these two components together, i.e. the extremism of Hamas and its perverse desire of wanting to end Israel’s existence, it is easy to make an association with other instances where Jews and particularly Israelis were victimized in this manner.

The **only way** to achieve **peace** in this region is not only to work with the moderates but also to **confront terrorism**, to confront those who are working **against** any kind of **peace** process and put **obstacles** in the way of **peace**. So Hamas is **not legitimate** and Hamas control of the Gaza Strip is **not legitimate**. And those who **suffer** from this are the **Israelis** and those who want to live in **peace** in this region. This is a **zero sum game** and you need to understand it. This is a **zero sum game** not between Israel and Hamas, this is a **zero sum game** between the **extremists** and the **moderates**.

Livni then makes an affirmation with the use of “only way” thus informing the listener that war is simply the last option Israel has, else it will remain victim of further attack. Therefore two options are being presented one is war and the other is submission to terror. Here the term “peace” and “confront terrorism,” “against” and “obstacles” are alternated to achieve the attitude position desired which is support for OCL. “Not legitimate” signals that Hamas is the only legitimate target without however making

mention of the Gazan civilian population. Moreover the usage of “suffer.” “Israelis,” with “peace” ultimately is being equated with the triple use of “zero sum game” and therefore war as being the manner to stop Israeli victimization (“moderates”) at the hand of the “extremists” that seek their destruction.

**Everybody** knows this in this region but, unfortunately, things that **we all** understand in this region are not the words that you are going to hear publicly - because of **the pictures** that the **radical elements** spread, because of **the pictures** that some parts of Arab society see on television and maybe the international community as well. **But** the role of the leadership is to speak up and to say **yes, maybe** these are **the pictures**. But Hamas is to **blame**. This is their own **responsibility** and these are the ones who **control** the Gaza Strip and these are the ones who **place their own civilians in the risk** of a military operation. These are the words that we **expect** the international community to say.

The manner this next passage opens with a hypothetical collective consensus, “everybody” and then “we all” alerts the listener, thus Israelis, that what is being referred to is an understood concept. “The pictures” and “radical elements” are jointly annexed to imply lies of the Arabic and International media that are being spread by Hamas to hurt Israel’s image. Moreover the declamatory or rather disclamatory use of “but” and “yes, maybe” indicate an unstated veracity contained in “the pictures,” however accountability of which are then pinned down entirely on Hamas with the terms “blame,” “responsibility,” “control” and “place their own civilians at risk.” Livni is here asserting that Hamas knew Israel would retaliate with force this time but persisted in targeting Israelis and thus brought disaster on its own people. “Expect” is used in relation to the

international community in a way that imparts the feeling that something is owed by it for omissions committed in the past at the Israelis expense.

Israel did not leave the Gaza Strip in order to come back. We have **no intention** of controlling the lives of the Palestinians. That is **not a part** of our values and it is **not our** aspiration. **But sometimes** a state or a government reaches the point at which there is **no other alternative [...]** **Israel has paid the price for its restraint [...]**

In this next passage Livni takes a position of negation with “no intention,” not a part” and “not our” towards what she implies being only a superficial misconception. Nonetheless “but sometimes” again alerts the listener of the real positional attitude in the matter, i.e. “no other alternative.” The way the sentence “Israel has paid the price for its restraint” imparts the image of protracted torment and feeling of loss that has become unbearable. Such positional declaration is delivered in a relatively frank manner despite the caution that precedes it.

[...] And in order to do so, **we need to use some power**. [...] **maybe** Israel is stronger and **it looks** like the **Palestinians** are weaker. **In a way** we feel in Israel, that this is the reverse story of David and Goliath. Because the **appearance** is that Israel is stronger - and **thank God** that Israel is stronger. **But** we are not using our power and our forces **as we could** - unlike Hamas, which **uses everything** in order to target civilians. During this operation, we are making **every effort** to prevent civilian casualties.

There is a **rocket now heading** towards Kissufim.

So, **we have** the military power **but we cannot** use it because of our own values and not because the international community has asked us not to use it. **But the there is a point** in time at which we needed to do what we are doing now. **Enough is enough** and we are going to use **all of** our forces. We are **trying** to avoid civilian casualties, that is true. The targets **are only** Hamas targets. We are talking about their headquarters; the places in which they are situated.

“We need to use some power” unequivocally understates the real power or type of proportionality that the orator means to imply. Than Livni specifically and most significantly points to the “Palestinians” as a whole group rather than as she did so far in this speech. Using “maybe” and “it looks” shows anxiety and mistrust of the capability and intentions of the enemy even if outwardly it seems weak. Moreover the use of the David and Goliath metaphor here is particularly important since it is a direct marker of Israeli identity and culture, thus serving as an innuendo for the target listener to identify with the correct ethnic marker.

Even though Israeli military superiority is explicitly stated in relation to the enemy, the use of “in a way” and “appearance” and “thank God” are here employed to negate this notion and further project anxiety and weakness. To a certain extent Livni is affirming that the feeling of total security is unattainable, unless enough force is used,

here restraint is expressed through the use of “but” and “as we could.” “Uses everything” here means that the enemy is utilizing all its might to target Israel while Israel makes “every effort” to prevent civilian deaths, that in reality is an idealistic stipulation. At which point the strong attitude imparted by the phrases “but there is a point” and “enough is enough” indicate that Livni is invoking the Israeli sentiment ‘this time we fight’ after being targets of aggression for long enough. Noteworthy in this passage is the way the previous attitude is reinforced by interjecting in real time the factual account that a “rocket is now heading” towards Israel, therefore stressing the gravity of the situation that the words “we have” beget a feeling of helplessness that needs to be countered in the same manner Hamas is, i.e. using every means at Israel’s disposal. Such statement is in part quelled by the utterance of “but we cannot” which is again a reassurance that caution not to do harm will be taken and “are only” explicitly designates only Hamas as legitimate targets, which however because the nature of OCL renders this aspect problematic if not unrealistic.

#### **4.5 Text 4**

**December 28, 2008. Letter from Israel Ambassador Leshno-Yaar to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.**



I refer to your press release, dated 28 December 2008 in which you expressed grave concern and distress at the violence in the Gaza Strip. I am both **surprised** and **disappointed** that you did not find it appropriate to issue any public statement when **Israeli civilians** in towns and cities across southern Israel were **targeted** by Hamas and other **Palestinian terrorist** groups with rockets and mortars in an **unrelenting and indiscriminate fashion**.

This text consists of a letter of complaint to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay by Israeli Ambassador Leshno-Yaar. The ambassador asserts that he is “disappointed” and “surprised” in relation to a press release issued by the High Commissioner that shows concern about the disproportionate violence in Gaza. Leshno-Yaar states that his disappointment stems from the fact that no public statement was issued when “Israeli civilians” were being “targeted” in “indiscriminate fashion” by “Palestinian terrorists”. As the previous discourses, delegitimization of the enemy and accusation of irrational behavior subsist. Such opening already shows traits of victimhood coupled with an exaggerated sense of entitlement and righteous anger aimed to eradication of terror with force (Volkan, 1997).

It is not difficult to notice that in your statement, while you strongly condemn Israel, you do not - **even once** - call upon Hamas and those acting under its acquiescence to stop immediately the intentional targeting of Israeli civilians.

Leshno-Yaar shows further amazement at how the UN commissioner “strongly condemns Israel” but “not even once” Hamas and its supporters for their intentional targeting of civilians. In fact this statement is mistaken since after checking the UN press release that

is linked on the same letter by Leshno-Yaar on the MFA site, one can assess that Hamas was in fact also reprimanded for causing the death of an Israeli civilian. Whereas the accidental nature or purposefulness of such inaccuracy cannot be determined, it could represent a feeling of mistrust towards outside powers stemming from a sentiment of always being treated unfairly, a feature that was encountered in the previous text. Moreover Leshno-Yaar shows that he is somewhat ashamed of the “courageous decision” (he quotes then Secretary-General Kofi Annan) when “Israel fully withdrew” from Gaza. The “cause of peace” initiated by Israel is portrayed as having resulted in Gaza becoming a “terrorist stronghold” and platform for Israeli uncertainty that now needs immediate action. The following parts display a surprise towards terrorism thus as in the case of the previous statements expressing incredulity to what Israel had to sustain at the mercy of Hamas’ “sophisticated weapons” while exercising “remarkable restraint” to the “full-scale” attacks launched by Hamas after breaking the “state of calm.” Furthermore and in similar tones to the previously analyzed discourses the ambassador asserts that “no country in the world” would be so tolerant of “such an onslaught against its citizens,” thus implying that what the UN commissioner is calling disproportionate violence is actually self-defense which was resorted to after Israelis became “virtual hostages” in their own land. A hostage is a victim of someone else’s crime and such marker is being applied to all Israelis not just those in the south, hence displaying anxiety about future range of Hamas’ rockets or worse. Moreover phrases like “painful decision” in relation to OCL is contrasted with the enemies that “seek to kill” and “terrorize”



In the previous section Leshno-Yaar reiterates Israel's position in regard to non-combatant "Palestinian people" and of specifically "focusing its strikes" against terrorists. He also asserts that "extraordinary attention" "to avoid" civilian deaths was being taken, echoing the assertions made in relation to the previous discourse by Livni. This positioning of words that is a morally normative one and implicitly suggests that an ideal scenario is unlikely, hence that sometimes harm to civilians is inevitable even in justified warfare. In another part the enemy is demonized as being an inhuman actor that "glorifies murder and celebrates death," and that attacks Israeli forces from civilian structures, thus implying that these structures automatically become military targets.

#### **4.6 Text 5**

##### **December 29, 2008. Address to Knesset by FM Livni on Gaza operation.**

FM Livni in this discourse addresses the Israeli political elite as well as the entirety of its citizenry. From the start she shows deep concern by using the terms "security situation," "bombing," and "days of ordeal." After analyzing the first section one may denote the FM's strong position while again at the same time speaking of the Israeli situation as being somewhat disadvantaged. She calls for all Israelis to be united in supporting the government's decision in "fighting the terrorist rule" in the Strip that is thusly posited as being just. This feature has already been observed in similar terms in the PM's speech, here done by contrasting positive value terminologies such as

“responsibility” and “considered judgment” with “criticism,” “factionalism,” and “politics.”

[...] between those who believe in **live-and-let-live** [...] **hate, incitement, terror and violence** are their daily routine, the basis for educating their children, and the voices emanating from some of their mosques. [...] the world has to choose a side. [...] No longer is it Israel on one side and the Arab world on the other. [...] **Israel chose** its side the day it was **established**; the **Jewish people chose** its side during its thousands of years of **existence**, and the prayer for **peace** is the voice sounded in the synagogues.

The previous extract contains strong accusations directed towards the enemy that in turn are used to reflect the moderate nature of Israeli demeanor described with “live-and-let-live” and “peace.” “Israel chose” and “established” remind the listeners of the reasons why the state was established, while not being a direct reference to the Nazi genocide, the word “existence” in the way it is used in this extract signals existential threat and anxiety that require fighting in order to quell it. Thus OCL is framed as a just entitlement and proportional act of self-defense. In fact the next segment in this speech displays anger and the desire to eradicate terror forcefully and that choosing peace is not synonym with surrender. Livni then uses a barrage of strong adjectives that again show assertive discourse, such as “radical,” “terrorist elements” and “extremism” to dismiss any responsibility on Israel’s part as causing such radicalization, a feature that was encountered in the general public’s opinions. Therefore Livni indirectly posits that the war on Hamas means “choosing peace and life” and “the right side.” Hamas is described as the “common enemies,” which means that it is enemy of both Israel and the

Palestinians and therefore OCL is again being portrayed as an effort for liberation and a step in the peace process and “the idea of two states.”

Moreover Livni echoes Peres with the high principles expressed as “values,” “aspirations for peace” and “democracy,” whereby asserting that despite Israel upholds these, will not be dithered from protecting “each and every Israeli” with the necessary force. The FM then asserts that Israeli desire for peace is not to be interpreted as a sign of “weakness.” However after making this assertion the FM makes the association between attributes ascribed to Hamas, “extremist,” “lives off fear” and “hate” with “Iran and Syria,” that unmask a certain level of fear and anxiousness with regards to Israeli security and deterrence. For the sake of brevity passages that mirror the previous discourses (especially the one by the same orator) will not be delved into in too much detail, it suffices to assert that the inherent message of this speech is one of Israeli legitimization and justness to act in self-defense. The war is characterized as a struggle between “extremists” who “do not recognize the existence of Israel or Israel’s right to exist” and “moderates,” the “right side” who, as Livni posits, recognize that this war is necessary for the peace process.

Again the terms “recognizing Israel,” “renouncing terror,” and “accepting previous agreements” are presented here as being the grounds on which all responsibility is put on the enemy, thus denying having any in “violating the calm.” No reference of the Palestinian citizens suffering is ever made in this speech apart from “the population’s

situation” which is Hamas’ sole responsibility from Livni’s words. Phrases like “done everything,” “avoid the moment” and “forced to take action” again impart reluctance to strike back at the enemy and not being inclined to favor war, but right after the words “finally came” somehow deny the sincerity of the previous assertions and implies calculation. This is affirmed by “will make the most of it” that denotes a certain predisposition to impart a heavy blow to the enemy regardless of the urban context in which this will occur.

It is the leader’s **responsibility** to **make choices**. Leadership has the **power** and the **responsibility** to do **what is right**, even if runs **counter to public opinion**, and this is the test of **what is right**.

This is also a test of the leadership of the Arab public in Israel. You are leading the Arab population here on a thin rope. The thin line between what is **allowed** and what is **forbidden** must not be crossed - between **legitimate** and **illegitimate**, between **right** and **wrong**. Each of you must choose a side, and the choice is not between Arab and Jew. The right side is the **State of Israel** along with all the moderate elements in the region, including the lion’s share of the Palestinian public and the Arab world. Then there is the side of **terror and extremism**. There is **no middle ground**.

In the passages above FM Livni uses the pedestal of leadership to attest that it is the duty of the government to make the right choices and therefore going to war was the just action to take. This is stressed with the morally charged “responsibility,” “make choices,” “power” and “what is right.” Again she is calling the public to unite under one identity, dissuading factionalism and thus supporting the decisions of the government. “Counter to public opinion” expresses precisely this feeling whereby Livni is calling the

Israeli public to support the government's decisions and let it do the rest, since it knows "what is right."

The next portion of this extract is posited as cautionary advice to the leadership of the Arab public in Israel (which displays a level of distrust) to choose the right side in the matter as "no middle ground" exists. Livni like Olmert and Peres contrasts dualistically good and evil with the verbalization of "allowed" and "forbidden," "legitimate" and "illegitimate," "State of Israel" and "terror and extremism." Such formulations of manichean dualism expressed in this manner displays a certain level of societal regression where the leadership asserts its importance in decision-making during a crisis situation and calls for unity, through careful handling of the rhetoric in an already existing polarization or fragmentation of opinions within the large-group psychology.

Yesterday I was in Sderot with the foreign ambassadors, and the mayor told them a story that I would like to share with you as well. **Schoolchildren who wanted to prove their rabbi wrong held a butterfly in their hands and asked him if it was alive or dead. If he said alive, they would crush it; if he said dead, they would open their hands and set it free. Upon being asked, the rabbi responded, "It is in your hands. If you wish, it will live. If you wish, it will die."**

The little story conveyed in this passage from FM Livni's speech is consonant with veiled rhetoric pertinent to the current analysis. This anecdote is thusly addressed to the moderate Arabic public inside and outside Israel; it is stating that the responsibility for the survival of the peace process lies entirely in their hands. Here the usage of "test," "thin rope" and "thin line" in the previous passage are emblemized metaphorically and rather patronizingly in this story, if perceived from the Arab perspective.

**Israel knows** how to **rally together** when it is **fighting for its own**. A country must **protect all** its citizens. On the way here, I heard that Hamas has announced that the man killed by the rocket strike in Ashkelon was a Zionist, although he was actually an Israeli Arab. **They don't make that distinction**.

The phrase “Israel knows” is another example where Livni’s arguments are constructed in such a manner to contain within them built-in assessments of Israeli group consciousness and action during war conditions. “Rally together,” and “fighting for its own” again resonates with Volkan’s tent analogy rallying around the protector of collective identity, i.e. the leadership. FM Livni asserts that a clear differentiation subsists, stating that Israel is fighting for both Jews and Arabs in Israel. Therefore a difference between Israel as the benign rational and the indiscriminate and thus irrational enemy is premised, through the contrasting phrases “protect all” and “they don’t make that distinction.”

We have conducted ourselves with **unsurpassed restraint**. We grinded our teeth, bit our lips, unturned every stone, to prevent the need for widespread action. **However**, our responsibility is to the **safety of our children**, their right to walk to **school and kindergarten**. **Living quietly** is the right of every person on this earth. This parliament, like this **entire nation**, needs to be **united** and to send out our thanks to the IDF, to the members of Israel Security Agency, and to all those **fighting and protecting** the home front. The **home front** that has become **the front line** in recent years, and to which we must **restore peace of mind**.

Again the orator is explicating notions of aggrandized moral values such as those contained in “unsurpassed restraint,” with feelings of justified undertaking delineated by

the phrasing of “however,” “safety of our children,” “school and kindergarten” and “living quietly.” Consequently Livni ends this discourse by stating alarmingly that the “home front,” Israel (which is a very strong ethnic marker) has become the battlefield (“the front line”), hence as the opening FM Livni is calling for support and synchrony of ideas between the public and the government.

#### **4.7 Text 6**

**December 31, 2008. PBS interview with Gen Michael Herzog, chief of staff to DM Barak.**

General Herzog in this interview is more concerned with the strategic, tactical and logistic aspects of the war but does let on to features pertinent to this analysis. For instance he states that “the purpose” of OCL and thus as the general implies, only purpose, is that of stopping the rocket fire and any “hostile activities” that undermine Israel’s security. On one hand such statement focuses the IDF’s activities to a specific task however the words “any other” does not adequately circumscribe the strategic parameters with which the military is supposed to deal. Whereas Herzog does admit that a ceasefire with Hamas would be out of the question until it is “where we want it to be” in terms of accepting Israeli conditions that he terms “sustainable,” meaning a long-term solution. When asked about the possibility of a ground invasion and its repercussions Herzog uses terms as “complex,” “densely populated” and “high-friction conflict” that

express a modicum of anxiety and a display of little tolerance to losses. However unlike FM Livni's 28<sup>th</sup> December 2008 speech, Herzog is imparting a more realistic conception of the damage that could be caused with the application of proportionality the Israeli military would be employing. Moreover he also asserts the military superiority ("much stronger") of the IDF that could amount to a narcissistic investment in identity of the IDF and Israel in general, thus denying vulnerability while at the same time being aware of this factor.

The phrases "what it takes" and "not deterred" are used in the context of a possible ground war as implying that if it becomes necessary in order to defend Israelis it would be carried out when air-strikes are no longer enough, rather than as a precaution to minimize civilian casualties. With regards to the situation of Gazan people the general states that "they're in an unpleasant situation because it's a war zone," that here is implied as Hamas' responsibility. Thus notwithstanding the implicit allusion in the discourse that attacks would be directed towards military targets, the affirmation of Gaza being a "war zone" is used as a stipulation that certain circumstances that war entails are beyond the military's control notwithstanding all the precaution taken. This assertion markedly shows an inhibition of empathy towards the citizens of Gaza, however military personnel in general are often required to be predisposed to such attitudes in the first place. Moreover the terms "topple" and "crush," that according to Herzog were not the aim of the IDF, are followed by the reiteration of its aim: "stop firing for as long as possible." However arriving at such a sustainable solution through an air and ground intervention



implies the use of ample force after an extended period of excessive concern with deterrence rather than pursuing other means. Noteworthy also is the fact that this interview completely omits mention of what kinds of weaponry were being employed.

Last year, we were **threatened** by rockets with a range of 3 to 5 miles. Now it's 27 miles. Next year, it **could** reach deeper into Israel, **as deep** as Tel Aviv. This is not something that we're ready to live with.

Moreover the General admits to preoccupation with potential conflict with the usage of “the future,” “larger showdown” and “not rushing” that seem to have been used as a further disclaimer for the unpredictability of the situation. Whereas the discourse does not outwardly attest to willingness for future and more extensive war with the enemy; however it does not preclude this possibility either. Herzog employs the words “threatened,” “could” and “as deep” to affirm a possible future situation Israelis are not willing to risk and as such the only solution was a military one.

#### **4.8 Text 7**

**December 31, 2008. Foreign Minister Livni press conference on IDF operation in Gaza.**

For **eight years now**, Israel has been **under attack** from the Gaza Strip and it has **become worse**. Hamas, which is an **extreme** Islamic organization, a **terrorist** organization, a designated **terrorist** organization, took control of the Gaza Strip and, in a way, **took its civilians hostage** and has been **targeting Israel** on a daily basis [...] and other radical elements in the region and the there is **a point at which** any government - and the Israeli government - **must decide to stop this**. [...] and has been abusing the situation in order to **target Israel**. Israel **tried everything** before the military operation.

This statement by Livni reiterates much of the arguments presented before by the same orator and other speakers. It contains the familiar notions affirming Israel as a party entitled to strong action and frustration when being put on the same level of Hamas, and also when mentioning the disengagement from Gaza that resulted in Hamas taking power. In this public address the designated audience is the international community in general and as observed in other statements it starts by asserting the worsening predicament the Israeli people were in and had to endure at the hands of Hamas. “Took its civilians hostage” echoes the same argument presented by Olmert on 27<sup>th</sup> of December. When this phrase is coupled with “targeting Israel” the motivation for going to war acquires the connotation of liberation of Gazans apart from Israeli self-defense, thus one group of faultless victims helping another. The last point made in this passage, much like other instances encountered in other discourses, stresses the legitimacy of action since Israel is the injured party and thus the proportionate response was OCL after attempting to resolve the crises with every other means.

Now, one of the elements of the truce declared six months ago was **full cessation** of the smuggling of weapons through these tunnels. **Unfortunately**, Hamas did not do that, and violated this agreement. **Before the truce**, the places that **were under threat** from the Gaza Strip were places in or near the Gaza Strip, including Sderot. **Today** a larger part of Israel is under this threat. I have just visited Beer Sheva which, for the first time, discovered that it is **under the threat** of Hamas missiles, due to the **fact that during the truce**, Hamas used these tunnels in order to get more and more missiles. We cannot accept, **in the future**, a situation in which Israel is **being targeted**. That is one point, and the other is the **continuous smuggling** of weapons from Egypt through the tunnels to the Gaza Strip.

The passage above imparts to the listener being perceived as living under the yoke of mounting anxiety, which is illustrated by Livni as becoming increasingly worse. The number of Israelis that are under threat of rocket fire is spoken of as growing alarmingly and had reached the point decisive and forceful action was the only solution to guarantee Israel's safety and ultimately survival. Hence the word "unfortunately" is used in such a manner to deny the rational capabilities and motivations of Hamas members and therefore implies that concerted action is the only course of action viable in order to achieve "full cessation" of "being targeted" and the "continuous smuggling," and therefore achieve a higher level of deterrence in relation to other actors that could see Hamas' actions as an example to follow.

All of these attacks are **directly targeted** at places that **we know** are part of Hamas and **we are working** in order to make a **clear distinction** between Hamas as a government and a terrorist organization, and the civilians. **But unfortunately**, while we are doing so, you need to understand that **they are not only living** in these places. Some of the places in which **they manufacture missiles** are buildings in which people are living, and the **civilians know** that someone is a member of Hamas, or this is a place in which **they manufacture missiles**.

Livni mentions that Israeli forces were doing everything in their power to avoid civilian deaths in three instances during this press-release, albeit in a brief manner. However the previous extract is rather important because here the FM imparts confident assertions through the phrases “directly targeted,” “we know,” “we are working” and “clear distinction” through which differentiation between combatant terrorists and civilians, including Hamas as government is made. Nonetheless “but unfortunately” signals a reversal of the previous argument inasmuch displays clear lack of empathy towards the civilians when compared to the achievement of the set Israeli goals in the intervention. In fact the uttering of “civilians know” puts a certain amount of responsibility for their current situation on them because they are portrayed as actively allowing in their midst Hamas operatives known by them to manufacture missiles that are used to target Israelis. This leads to the precautionary methods employed to avoid excessive civilian deaths, i.e. ground invasion as opposed to air-raids, phone calls and leaflets, which despite being preventative means, in the light of such comments acquire secondary level of priority.

There is a reality that **we cannot live with**, or we could not live according to this reality **any longer** and we **needed to change the equation**. [...] So we **needed to change this equation** and this is what we have already achieved, during this operation. This is the truth. We are **not prepared to live** any longer in a region and in a situation in which **they believe** that they can do whatever they like - hoping that Israel shows restraint because **we are more responsible**. We showed that **this equation has changed**.

This last selection from Livni's discourse resonates with the sentiment of Israeli assertive or forceful reaction to aggression that lies at the foundation of Israeli self-identity. While "we are more responsible" is an allusion to caution taken so not to cause harm to civilians, in the discourse it is outweighed by the overtly expressed need to impart a significant lesson to Hamas.

## 4.9 Text 8

**January 1, 2009. PM Ehud Olmert in Be'er Sheva.**

The following extract is from a speech by PM Olmert addressing Israeli citizens in one of the Southern localities within the radius of Hamas' fire. Therefore Olmert is addressing the whole Israeli population through the plight of the Southern Israelis under direct fire.

It **was clear** that we could not live in the **reality** which **had been created**. We could not countenance a situation in which hundreds of thousands of people were going to sleep and waking up in the morning in **fear, distress and uncertainty**. We will act so that there will be quiet in the southern communities. I very much **hope** that we will **succeed** in reaching our goals as quickly as possible. What we want is for our **children** to grow up in **safety** and that the children of Sderot, Be'er Sheva and Ashkelon will not have to **flee** from the **shriek** of missiles. We have not declared war on the residents of Gaza. I reiterate that we will treat the population with **silk gloves** but will apply an **iron fist** to Hamas.

Olmert interposes the words “clear,” “reality” and “created” with past tense verbs “was” and “had” thus asserting a long-standing situation highlighted by feelings of “fear,” “distress” and “uncertainty.” Whereas the use of such phrasing does not imply an attempt to inflame past trauma or time collapse linking to a specific past event (apart from the current rocket fire and recent events such as the threat posed by Iraqi Scud missiles in the 1990s), it does however revive a feeling of antagonism towards the enemy, that is attacking a helpless population without any reason and in spite of the efforts done by their group towards peace. This would certainly lead to a shared sense of entitlement, just revenge or at least action. The listener that has already specific mental formulations about the past would jump to the conclusion that given the unbearableness of the situation strong military action was truly the only solution at that point, as the widespread public support for OCL attests. Olmert’s uses the words “hope” and “succeed” in relation to OCL’s goals and quick conclusion. Of particular significance here is the use of “hope” that implies a sincere aspiration but at the same time one that cannot necessarily be expected to come to fruition. Such proposition entails that the audience while being aware of this possibility, acquires a sense of dignified concern for what is happening in Gaza, albeit in a superficial manner. Then the positive markers “children” and “safety” contrasting with “flee” and “shriek” further create a sense of uneasiness that amplify entitlement for revenge or re-victimization. Furthermore the promise by Olmert of using “silk gloves” with civilians and an “iron fist” on Hamas affords the PM to erect an upstanding moral position explicitly asserting that civilian targets are not on the IDF’s



agenda while only military ones are legitimate. However in the light of “hope,” this is an idealized scenario and hence an unrealistic expectation or assurance.

#### **4.10 Text 9**

##### **January 3, 2009. Statement by DM Ehud Barak.**

This statement by the Defense Minister was delivered to the Israeli public on the day the ground forces entered Gaza as part of OCL. The DM specifically asserts by using “against” that the enemy is Hamas but continues on linking the “terrorists” with “affiliates” and “infrastructure.” The last two remarks inform the listener and expects trust that whatever the results and casualty toll, it is the “terrorist” assailant who would be paying the price not innocents. The DM then almost shows pride and thus denying insecurity or uncertainty, by stating that the IDF “dealt an unprecedented heavy blow,” and now in order to “complete their mission” a ground incursion was needed. These statements in addition to terms such as “widen,” “deepen,” and “as much as needed” contain direct connotations with the proportionality of the mission, implying that the IDF would apply the necessary force needed to stop the threat, bringing “significant change” and thus impart a long-lasting lesson to Hamas.

Our aim is to **force** Hamas to **stop** its hostile activities **against Israel and Israelis** from Gaza, and to bring about a **significant change** in the situation in the Southern part of Israel. We have carefully weighed all our options. We **are not** war hungry **but** we **shall not**, I repeat - we **shall not** allow a situation where our towns, villages and civilians are constantly **targeted** by Hamas. It will not be **easy** or **short**, but we are **determined**.

Barak then makes a defensive statement that calls for legitimization and right to self-defense, although veiling elements of revenge and re-victimization that is conveyed to the target audience by the wording of “are not,” “but,” “shall not” and “targeted.” In contrast with the previous text by PM Olmert and as expected Barak admits that an “easy” or “short” conclusion of the conflict is unrealistic to arrive at but asserts a “determined” attitude, that again signals use of force informed by a sense of entitlement. Also “but” is here being used as a sort of proviso or refutation of an implicit meaning intended to ward off potentially negative inferences concerning Barak’s general attitude in matters of war and thus reluctance, being forced into war and having no other options.

This notion is confirmed by one of the last passages in this statement where Barak announces “we are peace seekers.” We have restrained ourselves for a long time but now is the time to do what needs to be done.” This instills a sense of dignified just action and ethnic pride. However right after the resolve articulated (“determined”) by Barak in regards to the ground invasion he gives positively charged inferences relating to the humanitarian aspects of the action, where “aware,” “are doing,” “provide,” and “needs” are used to show the intrinsic difference between the Israeli forces and Hamas. The IDF



and the military is portrayed as conscientious in regard to the citizens of Gaza and “peace seekers” and defenders of Israeli “peace,” “tranquility” and providing “freedom from threats.”

#### **4.11 Text 10**

**January 4, 2009. CNN Interview with FM Livni.**

Through this interview FM Livni is addressing the international community with relation to (at the moment of the interview) the still unfolding second phase of the operation. Livni states immediately that the IDF is sticking to the original goals of the mission, therefore significantly weakening Hamas and stopping the threat posed by the smuggling of weapons. By stating that “they expected our military operation” she is immediately portraying the IDF’s position as in disadvantage as being subject the ‘fog of war’ and shows the reduced tolerance to casualties discussed by Avruch (1998), when uttering concern about kidnapping of IDF soldiers and the danger these were in once entering Gaza.

Q: You say it will help the peace process. But every time Israel goes to war, whether it is against Hizbullah or whether it is against Hamas, it does in fact end up helping those who are the victims or the targets of the war, particularly, given how many civilians are being killed by your forces in Gaza.

FM Livni: I can understand that, **the reality - not only** the pictures coming from Gaza, but **the reality** - can provoke demonstrations in different parts of the world, especially in the Arab world. **I can understand the empathy** that the public and public opinion in different parts of the world **feel towards the Palestinians**. We are **not fighting the Palestinians** - we **are fighting Hamas**, a terrorist organization which controls the Gaza Strip. **True**, there are also civilian casualties, **but we are trying to avoid** civilian casualties, even though it is **not easy**, while Hamas is **targeting our civilians**.

In the above excerpt the interviewer is proposing to the FM that there is the possibility that Hamas will gain legitimacy because Israeli forces were causing the death of an elevated number of civilians. Therefore here the proportionality is being directly questioned. Livni in her response uses the words “the reality” implying the obvious state of war Israel is in and again emphatically points out that this is exclusively directed towards the Hamas terrorists and not the Gazan people, thus justifying the proportionality as defensive action yet again. Whereas Livni asserts to understand the concern showed by the international community and Arab world for the civilians, she defends Israel’s position in relation to “the reality” of civilian deaths with the phrases “but we are trying to avoid” and “not easy” while at the same time justifying and legitimizing it with “targeting our civilians.” Here Livni is displaying the intolerability of having their citizens under attack and thus changing the situation being mandatory through a heavy blow to Hamas, which also overrides the needs of Gazan civilians although these are reportedly being taken into consideration.

Q: The Palestinian Authority has complained very bitterly about the disproportionate use of Israeli force. What is your view on the proportionality of your response?

FM Livni: I would like to say that **I cannot understand** the nature of the **proportionality that is needed**. I mean, they targeted a school last week in Beersheba, in Israel. **Do you think that** the proportionate reaction is to target a school there? We are not going to do this. **They are targeting civilians** - are not going to do this. So the only measure that we are taking is to **have them understand** that this needs to be stopped. This is the expression of a **state's right of self defense**. We tried a truce. We decided not to target at all; we decided not to retaliate at all. **It didn't help**. So, this time we needed to say that, yes, we are not **answering one to one** - one mortar, one missile will come from Israel. **This needs to be stopped**. So the question of **proportionality**, I think, is **being misused against Israel**.

Livni in the above segment professes incredulity and dumbfoundedness at the question about the level of proportionality with wordings like “I cannot understand,” “I mean” and “do you think that.” These represent positional statements to differentiate between Israeli defensive actions from Hamas’ illicit belligerence (“they are targeting civilians”) that portray Israel as the victim of the circumstances. The wording also circumvents the direct question of proportionality by trivializing the “proportionality that is needed” with the examples of proportionality supplied. Proportionality is therefore expressly stated by Livni as not being a matter of “answering one to one” and of “being misused against Israel.” As in the case of other discourses the arguments of legitimacy, right and unavoidability in order to attain peace, are presented without ever explicating upon the actual hardware being deployed and specific justification for these. This passage also transpires frustration of powerlessness over the situation, where display of powerful wording seemingly rests upon an underlying sentiment of powerlessness represented in “this needs to be stopped.”

## 4.12 Text 11

**January 9, 2009. PM Olmert's reaction to diplomatic developments & UNSC Resolution 1860.**

The State of Israel **has never agreed** that any **outside body** would **determine its right to defend** the security of its citizens. The IDF **will continue** operations in order to defend Israeli citizens and **will carry out** the missions with which it has been assigned in the operation. **This morning's rocket fire** against residents of the south only proves that the UN Security Council Resolution 1860 is not practical and will not be honored in actual fact by the **Palestinian murder organizations**.

In this very brief but salient address the PM reaches out to the Israelis with a critical reaction to UN Security Council Resolution 1860. The use of “has never agreed,” “outside body” and “determine its right to defend” explicitly state distrust of the international community’s expectations of Israel. This as in Peres’ case, reminds the listener that only its leadership knows to which extent Israeli security needs to be pursued, with the use of “will continue” and “will carry out.” This implies that outside Israel there exists no true comprehension of what security means to Israelis and as in Livni’s briefing on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December, Olmert highlights the danger of the situation by interjecting “this morning’s rocket fire.” More importantly the wording “Palestinian murder organizations” may have the effect of reinforcing Israeli antagonization of Palestinians and attests to both aggravation and impotence to stop terror, a heavy hand is

applied. Furthermore this blanket appellative inadvertently depicts the Palestinians as a whole as producers of “murder organizations”.

#### **4.13 Text 12**

**January 17, 2009. Statement by PM Ehud Olmert.**

On the most part this last discourse issued three weeks after the start of OCL, to the Israeli public on the day of the unilateral Israeli ceasefire from the Gaza war, by PM Olmert, reflects and consolidates the reflections contained in the discourses promulgated by the Israeli leadership at the start of the operation. The first part consists of a tribute to the security forces and members of the leadership for taking all the right decisions in order to achieve the goals demanded by the public characterized by positively charged words such as “determination,” “sophistication,” “courage,” “impressive ability” and “achievements.” Moreover identity construction of the upstanding character of the military is conveyed by appellatives such as “spirit of volunteerism,” “willingness to sacrifice,” “professionalism” and “fierceness of spirit.” OCL is thus reaffirmed as having been a wholly unavoidable and proportional endeavor in order to fulfill the security and deterrence needs of Israel.

Nonetheless even though Olmert asserts that a heavy blow had been imparted to Hamas' offensive capability and ability to rule, the use of "for some time" followed by "those who threaten us" transpires concern that full deterrence has yet to be achieved. The speech then shifts to pay homage to the fallen Israelis and to the patience the citizenry of the South showed. Moreover an almost identical iteration of justified action promulgated by Olmert in the first discourse analyzed is represented here, containing the familiar elements of the Disengagement, Hamas's violently seizing control, incomprehensible attacks on Israelis and hostage Palestinian civilians. Then nearing to the end of the speech Olmert addresses directly the "people of Gaza," stating "we do not hate you" and that no harm was intended to be wreaked upon them since all actions taken originated from the need to defend Israeli citizenry from terrorism. The PM speaking on behalf of all of Israel showed regret for the harm and "terrible" suffering Israel procured them because of the "cruel reality" and "intolerable situation created by Hamas" that transformed Gazans into victims as well. The harm to civilians is spoken of as having occurred despite all the effort put in order to avoid it and the humanitarian aid supplied throughout the course of the operation.

**Blessed** is the nation with such an army and such security and rescue services. I wish to express **my hope** that tonight the **first step** towards a different reality, one of **security** and quiet for the residents of Israel, **will be taken**. From the bottom of my heart, I thank the people of Israel, its fighters and their commanders for the **fierceness of spirit** and the **social solidarity** they demonstrated over these past weeks. This is the **secret of our strength** - it is the **foundation for our power** and it is the **hope of our future**.

Lastly this passage from Olmert's speech conveys a sense of being a short distance from acquiring long-lasting stability and security, albeit not being there yet. Ultimately "fierceness of spirit" which is equitable with the willingness to fight in order not to succumb to victimization is pointed out as being the source of unity in Israel and as being the foundational element that guarantees Israel's existence.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings and Conclusions**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The onset of this research was prompted by the initial research query that sought to probe whether historical anxiety in the form of chosen trauma had any influence in the application of proportionality in the three week Gaza conflict, discernable from official political discourse. In this introduction of the discussion a brief reiteration of the main points that were explicated throughout the research shall be given. The whole research was based on the notion that large groups such as nation groups function psychologically in a similar manner on both the individual and the collective levels. Groups that have undergone historical trauma, such as in the case of Jews throughout their history and Israelis in the sixty years since obtaining nationhood, may display instances of framing present conflictual circumstances in terms of past anxieties. Such anxieties may show up within the group as strong ethnic markers that bind all the members of a specific group in order to protect the core LG identity held by all members in times when this is under attack by an outside actor. These manifestations of historical anxiety may become visible at the collective level through the maintenance of specific beliefs and consistent mistrust



of out-group members, held by a substantial proportion of the population and at the individual level through the personalities of political leaders. Therefore focus of the current research revolved around finding the evidence of historical anxiety within discourse promulgated by the latter, in order to assess to what extent this shaped the proportionality principle applied in Gaza.

As such the principle of proportionality applied by the Israeli forces in the military intervention researched here, has been extensively probed in the initial chapter and literature review sections. This was done in order to provide a clear picture of the asymmetry between the damage procured by Israeli forces in Gaza in comparison to that initiated by Hamas' rocket fire into Israeli territory. It is deemed by the current researcher that the data and information provided in addressing the issue of proportionality in Gaza was sufficient to clearly illustrate the nature of the problem revolving around its application. Such issue was also stressed through the illustration of Israeli forces employing certain kinds of weaponry, the use of which was highly contested by the international community both during and after the intervention. Therefore in the current study the factor of proportionality was investigated in such a manner to determine whether there subsisted an ulterior extra-rational explanation in the form of chosen trauma that might have altered the requirements of proportionality on the Israeli side.

In order to do so a detailed explanation of the theoretical underpinnings of chosen trauma theory was supplied in the initial part of chapter three, after which examples of

distortion, anxiety and of historical events within the general Israeli population were identified through various studies. Most notably the secondary information supplied by Grossbard (2003) and the studies carried out by Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal (2011) and Halperin & Bar-Tal (2011), that linked the Zionist narrative held by a substantial proportion of the Israeli public to former trauma. Moreover other studies displayed how delegitimization and mistrust of the ‘out group’ were reflected in the widespread support for OCL by the general public, both before and after the intervention, clearly illustrated in the research carried out by Yaar & Hermann (2009) and Ben Meir (2009). Moreover in the actual analysis of data sets chosen for this study such traits outlined in the literature review were looked for.

The introduction part of the analysis supplied the reader with various explicit examples of historical anxiety references, found in public Israeli discourse around the time of the military intervention probed here. These examples were supplied to illustrate the subsistence of such traits in Israeli political discourse and so as to set an example of what chosen trauma or historical anxiety ought to look like in official rhetoric.

Before continuing to expound upon and qualify the nature of the findings of the analysis a brief reiteration of the text sampling shall be given. The twelve textual documents were sourced from the Israeli MFA website and as stated in the methodology section, were chosen because the issuing source of these was deemed the most reliable since it is a direct and official source to base such an analysis upon. Unlike other sources

such as media outlets the texts in the MFA website were free of the media content slant and only supplied the discourses in their entirety. Furthermore since these texts are located in the same place, it is easier for the reader to identify them. However owed to their official nature, explicit references to past historical anxieties were expected to be clad within rhetorical mastery and careful speech.

## **5.2 Proportionality Applied and Historical Anxiety**

After the detailed analysis supplied in the previous section one can clearly denote that the issue of proportionality requirement was rarely tackled directly in the official interviews and speeches promulgated during OCL. However when it was the case, such as in the discourses of FM Livni and DM Barak, this was always framed as a requirement needed to fulfill defensive purposes and not an offensive one, as iterated in the third chapter. One may confirm that such feature was repeatedly stressed throughout the texts in order to attest the legality of the intervention under IHL since self-defense was the focal prerequisite in order to legally carry out a military operation of the sort (Erakat, 2009). However in relation to the central aim of the current study it is clear from the results obtained that outright chosen trauma cannot be considered as having been portrayed as a determining factor in modulating the level of proportionality through out the texts, since its direct manifestation was scant. Hence one may posit that the analyzed discourses disprove any overt direct correlation between the nature of proportionality employed and previous episodes of unmourned collective traumas.

Whereas historical anxiety as outlined in this study was demonstrably shown to subsist within the Israeli sphere, both at the leadership and communal levels, it was ultimately determined that such psychological dynamic did not in fact manifest as a determining factor in regards to proportionality. It was established that within the official discourse chosen trauma was far too insubstantial and indirect to be considered as having been either instrumentalized by the political leadership or having been a central focus of its concern. Nonetheless such results do not necessarily signify that chosen trauma did not play a role to some degree, it simply means that its representation in the official discourse was a minimal one. Taking into consideration that the onset of the military operation was spurred primarily by requirements put by public opinion, to which the Israeli government did not show any resistance as it usually does in the case of other issues, as explained by Ben Meir (2009), the application of a determinate level of military force can be therefore said to have been steered by historical trauma narratives already extant within the general population that adheres to a rightist or Zionist narrative. This feature has been clearly shown in the literature review to carry substantial weight within the Israeli collective consciousness. Such narrative was also displayed overtly by President Peres and can be said to represent an instance of clear unmourned collective trauma manifest in active distortion of historical events that led to the foundation of the Israeli state.

Nonetheless as indicated in the methodology chapter of the current study through the argument put forward by Fairclough (2003), in order to obtain the best results from a discourse analysis one would ideally need a combination of the focused ‘micro’ analysis that is entailed within the methodological framework of DA with another ‘macro’ means of investigation. In fact the current researcher is certain that the veracity of such argument has been demonstrated with the results of the textual analysis and this is the reason why copious secondary data has been supplied in chapter three, for the purpose of grounding the initial research question in existing literature. Thus to reiterate, whereas the results disprove the claim that chosen trauma has had any explicit function in the application of proportionality in OCL for the evident lack of its overt portrayal in the official discourse, the fact remains that the secondary data provided in the literature review points to the opposite direction and thus in support of the initial research question. However such claim cannot be considered adequate enough to support the initial query of the current case study, for the reason that the secondary data does not directly address the case of OCL and demonstrate it but merely leads to it.

Therefore in order to clearly ascertain the role played by historical anxieties in the form of chosen traumas in the waging of OCL ideally the researcher ought to have carried out a parallel quantitative ‘macro’ investigation to probe public opinion. Hence such task could be picked up by subsequent researchers that share the same research interest expounded in the current study, in order to directly probe historical traumas in relation to this case study and contrast the results to those obtained here. Future research

in this area would be required to combine and contrast the current results with a quantitative survey based methodology appositely probing directly historical traumas in the public consciousness in order to fully compliment the current analysis.

### **5.3 Proportionality and Enemy Compliance**

The results of the analysis nonetheless consistently show that the level of proportionality as applied is directly correlated to the expected level of enemy compliance to Israel's requirements. Such notion is attested by the recurring themes of 'changing the situation' and Hamas not being where the Israeli leadership needs it to be and of the deterrence requirements set by it and supported by the general public. What the analysis in general shows is that when compared to the literature discussed in chapter three, relative to existing levels of Israeli perceptions of threat, is that the leadership did not instrumentalize prior collective trauma to achieve the support needed to be granted the consent to proceed. Thus such aspect was found to be uniformly absent throughout all of the texts. Arguably instrumentalization was not essential in order to achieve the sought security requirements displayed in the texts because existential anxiety is still a source of great distress to the general population, regardless of the internal fragmentation of opinions within the Israeli public. Although there subsisted certain instances where the group's historical trauma was expressly portrayed by some leading personages whilst addressing the than current rocket attacks, such manifestations in public discourse were minimal because it is held by the current researcher that such intentional conflation

would have in fact alarmed the already attack-sensitive Israeli citizenry even more and potentially inflamed collective trauma so much to cause the citizenry living under Hamas's rocket range to flee the southern part of Israel, even though statistically the lethality of these attacks was very low.

A consistent proportion of the population has been demonstrated through the existing literature to uphold certain self-serving beliefs relative to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, which serves to psychologically deny the foundational trauma experienced by preceding generations. Albeit heightened anxiety prior to OCL, which resulted in the extremely high support ratings for the intervention, cannot be said to have stemmed manifestly out of historical anxiety, it has been shown that holding a certain view of previous traumatic incidents helps to foster the popular requirement for establishing a sterner deterrent factor. Such deterrence in consequence begets an application of a specific typology of proportionality in open warfare, which was also shown to have won high approval ratings and support by the general public. It is held therefore that establishing a determinate type of deterrence was the main factor that has driven the proportionality applied. Throughout the analysis of the discourses it is clearly explained and stressed that achieving 'peace' and 'quiet' as well as significantly weakening Hamas were the prominent themes displayed by the leadership as being the main two objectives required by both the population and the Israeli government. The reach of such ends through the proportionality of using unbridled force against Hamas as the designated target, was in consequence an effort to establish deterrence, actively required by the citizenry in order to lessen its state of distress and furthermore dissuade any other attacks

of the sort against Israel by Hamas and other hostile actors in the future. In substance the prevalent inferable theme relative to achieving deterrence and proportionality in the discourses was that the sole way for Israel to reestablish its deterrence and thus appease the security requirements of its citizens, was by demonstrating the level of damage Israel was prepared and capable of inflicting to Hamas. This in consequence leaned on the surprise effect such force was expected to produce, i.e. enemy compliance. Such notion was inferred by the official discourses, to which the international community's concern was addressed heedlessly and with surprise as seen in Livni's CNN interview and Leshno-Yaar's letter to the UN. The discourse consequently shows a frequent element of compulsion ('no choice') for defensive purposes to conduct OCL, framed as an attempt to reinstate its deterrent position in relation to terrorist organizations present in the region, that the discourse entailed as proportional by employing the Israeli forces at their full capacity to combat terror.

#### **5.4 Consistent Characteristics of the Discourse**

Furthermore the setting of deterrence transpired throughout the texts with the representation of enmification and inflexible thinking with regards to the use of force that was required, justified in the discourse as necessary military intransigence. Such discursive articulations hinged on supplying the listener a praise-blame narrative and ascribing Hamas an identity so diametrically opposed to that held by the IDF and Israel in general, that attacking Hamas in order to procure its forceful removal was in Israel's best



interest. As explained in the theoretical section, the reproduction and transmission of certain core beliefs present within a group's collective memory that is engaged in intractable conflict, show up within the group in four common characteristics; justification for the outbreak of the conflict; persistent delegitimization of the enemy or 'other'; positive representation of the in-group; and representation of victimhood. All of these have been shown to be consistent and recurring characteristics of the texts analyzed and especially in the case of delegitimization and representation of victimhood, these have been shown within Israeli collective consciousness to have direct ties with holding onto specific historical anxieties (Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011). In consequence the reproduction of such characteristics in the discourse reaffirm the situational Israeli circumstance of being in the larger context of an intractable conflict but also resonate with the mental formulations of the receiving Israeli population that holds specific ideas and anxieties pertaining to past generational experiences. Again this notion can be said to have manifested in the widespread support for OCL by a majority of the public if the polls represent any indication.

In conclusion the four features mentioned above, in the texts revolved around the dicotimization of "us/good" and "them/evil," a theme that was encountered with the usage of words like "terrorist" and "murderous organizations". Whereas one might argue that this aspect is of no consequence or obvious in relation to the hypotheses of the current study, Volkan (1997) argues that the attributing negative qualities to the "out-group" or enemy within societies that experienced former trauma, often takes the form of

demonization and dehumanization of the 'other' thus reinforcing and justifying the use of violence. Whereas the civilian population of Gaza was addressed directly as being an innocent party to the conflict and not the enemy on several occasions, their presence in the discourses often took a backdrop position general framing of the conflict. The Gazans were scantily mentioned and when the sincere promise to avoid civilian deaths was uttered by the different Israeli figureheads, it was always presented as being an effort that however could not be wholly guaranteed. Thus the deligitmization of Hamas and it being stopped from firing rockets through force took precedence over the eventual civilian deaths, which was framed as unavoidable since the enemy was using them as shields. The Gazan population was repeatedly presented as also being the victimized other to the Israelis, but consistently from the Israeli point of view, i.e. the civilians were not put into harm's way by the Israeli forces but by Hamas. This aspect of the Gazan civilians in the public discourse, although acknowledging their suffering, left them almost unheard from the perspective of Israelis.

Nonetheless at this final point a clarification is in order, one must not make ethical or moral distinctions between the suffering of one people and another as this is in itself a mockery of morality. The reader should view the argument of trauma objectively in the light of what Finkelstein (2000) states while drawing from an observation made by Plato in antiquity, whereby one ought never compare the misery of two groups and imply that one's suffering is more legitimate than the other since this is tantamount to saying that one is more contented than the other.

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Gordon Formosa is a Maltese citizen; he read for a BA (hons) in Criminology at the University of Malta and graduated in 2011. Later on in 2012 he enrolled for a Dual Masters program offered by the University of Malta and the George Mason University in the United States. Upon completion of the Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution and Mediterranean security he hopes to be of service at a national and regional level.