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**'PEACE NOW' IN ISRAEL IN SEARCH OF AN
ALTERNATIVE IDENTITY**



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Abstract

Using the perspective of the role of fear in security and identity-based conflicts, I was motivated to investigate in this thesis how peace actors strive to be actively involved in peacemaking in Israel. The main objective of this thesis is to gain insight in the activities of Peace Now in light of the second Intifadah 2000-2004, and disorientation of peace camp. If successful, the results of this thesis might have an impact on creating space for my further work in the realm of conflict resolution and civil society peace work.

I approached the problem of security and identity, by analyzing how Israelis and Palestinians perceive violence, peace and conflict. Subsequently, based on theoretical framework, I stressed how fear and distrust influenced the identity formation of Israelis and Palestinians. Because identity was not approached properly, the failure of peace process happened. Other reason that influenced this collapse was an increase of Palestinian terrorism, perceived as a backlash to the peace camp initiatives in Israel.

Therefore, in this thesis I tried to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the problem of identities and how they relate to the security within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In particular I was concerned with the dynamics of identity formation within the actor Peace Now and its consequences for its peace work.

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1. Introduction

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defenses of peace must be constructed "

Constitution of UNESCO, 1945

The topic of this thesis is the role of peace movements in Israel and of Peace Now in particular in mobilizing civil society and supporting peace processes. My main motivation to study peace movements in Israel is my personal engagement in civil society work in Former Yugoslavia and that is why I wanted to draw parallels between two conflicts. Before I went to do fieldwork in Israel in July 2004, my attention was driven to the vulnerable position of peace movements and in particular Peace Now as a mainstream movement, during and after the second Intifadah in 2000.

During the first days of my fieldwork I happened to meet a Peace Now activist who was doing his annual reserve duty for Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). I asked him how he could do both duties simultaneously, to protest against government policies on settlements buildings in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and serve in the Israeli Defense Forces in Nablus in the West Bank? He replied: "I protest against government policies because I don't like the idea of occupation and I support two state solution, to live with Palestinians side by side. However, when it comes to my national duty, then I want to help my army to bring about security in Israel and by serving in Israeli Defense Forces, I show loyalty to my country and I have to defend it by all possible means". This kind of attitude explains how Peace Now's identity is alienated between civic and militaristic echoes; there is a permanent discrepancy between the political beliefs and national loyalty of Peace Now activists. Most peace activists that I have known in former Yugoslavia were either army deserters or conscious objectors, only a few served in the Yugoslav army. I was not prepared to meet peace activists who do double jobs; protest and serve in the army at the same time. This

makes Peace Now as the main peace movement in Israel distinctive and this I want to examine in this thesis.

My research interest concerns how Peace Now is striving to be actively involved in peacemaking in Israel. The main objective of this thesis is to gain insight in the activities of Peace Now in light of the second Intifadah 2000-2004 as the situation has become ever more complex. During the 1980s Peace Now achieved considerable success in influencing political decision-making and also in mobilizing for public demonstrations. These abilities now seem weaker.

After interviewing Peace Now activists and members of other movements or NGOs, my attention was drawn to a permanent struggle of Peace Now for an alternative identity. Therefore, the research question here is: How does Peace Now distinguish itself from other peace movements and which values are key to its collective identity? Furthermore, how may an analysis of identity help explain the seeming disintegration of Peace Now over the last five years?

My suggestion is that this represents an identity dilemma that affects their peace work.

In order to examine changes in Peace Now identity, it is however necessary to take a historical perspective. Peace Now is therefore examined since its establishment.

Since the formative years 1978-1982, Peace Now recognized that peace could not be achieved primarily by military means. In order for the security situation in Israel to be improved, Peace Now always demanded dialogue and negotiations. Consequently, it is crucial to link the issue of achieving security to the identity question of Peace Now. Both security and identity therefore form analytical concepts of this thesis.

Despite the fact that civil society has gained considerable attention for their role in establishing a peaceful and democratic society in Israel, it is a notable fact that civil society groups were excluded from the Oslo process from the beginning. In this context, one might ask as to what role peace movements such as Peace Now has had in Israel at all. This study will show that Peace Now has had a large group of followers and has in certain situations had a considerable impact on political decision-making in Israel.

The role of civil society in peace building has become an important reference point in the literature on how to establish peace. During the last decade, civil society players have increasingly been pictured as peace-building agents by peace researchers as well as by governments, donor agencies and NGO representatives (Orjuela 2004:18). Despite the

positive impact that civil society in general and peace movements in particular can play, there are few analyses that study the work of peace movements in particular. A notable exception is the work of Orjuela (2004), which has been particularly useful to this project. By studying the work and the dynamics of peace movements, conflict researchers strive to enhance knowledge of the role of peace actors and civil society during conflict.

Situated between the Israeli government and the Palestinian authorities, Peace Now has always aimed at bringing both sides of the conflict to the negotiation table. Peace Now played a crucial role in mobilizing the Israeli public to criticize the government's decision on Egypt and Lebanon. These protests fostered the negotiations that lead to the Oslo Accord. In recent years, this role as initiator and facilitator of negotiations has changed. Having noticed the earlier successes of Peace Now's active protests, the disintegration of Peace Now and peace block in Israel, and their apparent loss of relevance in recent years has struck me.

I wanted to analyze this problem due to my hypothesis that civil society actors can play a crucial role and be instrumental in peacemaking and pursue political change. It is civilians who need to get involved in managing or preventing further escalation. One of the obstacles of Oslo Accord was exactly the absence of civil society groups at the negotiation table. My personal engagement in civil society work in former Yugoslavia can best illustrate how important the role of civil society actors is in empowering people to seek for democratic reforms in the system.

1.2. Reflections on personal peace work

My research interest in the role of civil society in peacemaking is rooted in my own involvement in civil society activism during the wars in the Former Yugoslavia. In order to inform the reader why I choose to analyze the work of peace movements in Israel, I have to reflect on my previous work in the Former Yugoslavia as a pacifist and a human rights researcher.

Before 1991 Yugoslavia was composed of six republics and two provinces, Kosovo in the south and Vojvodina in the north: "But in June of that year, when Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic began to stoke nationalist flames and increase Serb dominance, the republic of Slovenia seceded, sparking a relatively painless ten – day war. Croatia, which

declared independence at the same time, faced a tougher exit. Because Croatia had a sizable Serb minority and a picturesque and lucrative coastline, the Yugoslav National Army JNA (Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija) refused to let it go. A seven-month war left some 10,000 dead and 700,000 displaced from their homes. By late 1991 it was clear that Bosnia (43 percent Muslim, 35 percent Orthodox Serb, and 18 percent Roman Catholic Croat), the most ethnically heterogeneous of Yugoslav's republics, was in a bind" (Power 2003:247). While the conflict in the northern-central part of the country escalated, in Kosovo the majority of Albanians were exposed to systematic human rights abuse and killings. After unsuccessful non-violent protesting, the armed group Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) launched armed attacks on Serbian military and police forces in 1997. By 1998 the situation in Kosovo escalated, with frequent human rights abuses. It was during this period when I worked as a human rights researcher and also witnessed the oppressive Serbian regime that I began to learn and understand the character of conflicts better.

During this time, Western liberal democracies and different independent Philanthropists gave strong support to the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society in the Former Yugoslavia. George Soros, a Hungarian born American Philanthropist, argued that only by supporting civil society and its alternative institutions, which can control state wrong doings, can democracy in the region be brought about. The NGO sector, an independent media and western style education system mostly benefited from his financing, which aimed at increasing people's awareness of the benefits of an open society. The countries of Former Yugoslavia are in a period of transition. The Middle East and the Balkans are two regions, which for over a century have been the focus of geopolitical interests and power struggles between great powers. Both regions consist of very mixed ethnic, religious entities with evident dilemmas of the states and security in the regions.

Drawing upon my previous experience and attachment with conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, I wanted to understand another conflict from a distance, with less emotional involvement.

This prompted me to go to Israel for field research and investigate in more detail the work of civil society groups. Because the peace movements in Israel are bigger in number and have more experience than in former Yugoslavia, I decided to narrow my focus and study how Peace Now, as the largest movement, is striving to be actively involved in peacemaking in Israel. Although my background is a main motivational factor in this work, this is not a comparative study. The sole focus is on Peace Now achievements and its attempts at supporting peace among Israelis and Palestinians.

1.3. Outline of the thesis

In order to provide the reader with a short description of the main issues that are stressed in this case study, I will provide a short outline of the thesis.

In the next chapter I will stress the concept of peace, violence and war in Israel, and also how these concepts are linked with security of Palestinians and Israelis. In the following section I discuss the role of Identity in civil society activism followed by an explanation of the methodology of the empirical analysis of this thesis. Chapter three outlines the historical background of the state of Israel since its establishment, then continues with a brief historical background of peace movements in Israel. The third part of chapter three contains the case study of Peace Now. This section is subdivided in three sections; which describe the development of Peace Now, its organizational activities and its ups and downs. The fourth chapter, which is subdivided into two sections, highlights the dilemma of security and identity of Peace Now as represented in interviews that I conducted in Israel in 2004. The conclusions of the thesis are drawn in chapter five.

2. Security and Identity in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Before I decided to do fieldwork in Israel, I was concerned with my personal security, and whether I should take the risk of going to Israel or not. I have faced a brutal conflict at home, in Kosovo, but never felt an existential threat, nor did I confront suicide bombs. I always felt I am at home, in a place where I belong. While reading about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I understood that the terms security and existential threat are crucial to the political discourse in Israel. This has to do with the collective memories and the long-term character of the conflict between Israel and Palestinians. During the interview process, there was not a single person who told me that she or he feels secure while living in Israel. For sure, all of them would choose no other place than Israel to live, as they feel they belong there. The majority of informants told me however that after the collapse of the Oslo Accord, they would rather prefer for their children to live in more secure places. Many Israelis knew why they feel insecure, but many do not want to know why Palestinian terrorists attack them. To better understand why security is at stake in the Israeli discourse

of conflict, I will stress the concepts of peace, war and violence, and how they interrelate. Of particular interest here are the different understandings of conflict among Israelis and Palestinians. My assumption is that it is imperative to engage with the Israeli discourse of conflict and security in order to understand Israeli approaches to peace making. This is of particular interest when the work of one specific peace actor is to be reviewed.

Furthermore, it is also suggested here that the concept of identity is crucial to the Israeli discourse of security. The second section of this conceptual chapter therefore discusses the concept of identity. The guiding question is if and how identity is a useful concept for disentangling the activities of a civil society actor engaging in peace work in Israel. The concept of identity is reviewed in the second part of this chapter (2.2), while in the third section (2.3) a review of the research methodology of my empirical work and analysis follows.

2.1. Approaching security: Peace, Violence, War

Most people think they know what peace means. But, in fact people often have very different understandings of this seemingly simple word: "And although most people would agree that some form of peace (whatever it means) is desirable, there are often vigorous, even violent, disagreements over how to obtain it" (Barash, Webel 2002:4). For some, peace is something to kill and die for, while for others, peace represents a living without hunger.

Can peace be achieved through violence only? This question points to the ambiguities of the term peace. Advocates of the "peace through war" thesis believe that in some situations, there is no alternative to force. Others believe that this idea is contradictory. They claim that peace can also be achieved by peaceful means and that violence only breeds violence. Let's then see how violence is perceived.

Violence is a general term to describe actions, usually deliberate, that cause or intend to cause physical injury to people. Violence is often associated with aggression.

Inter-group violence is the physical or psychological harm that results from one group acting against another, or when groups act against each other. Individual acts that harm

others can be considered inter-group violence if the perpetrators are acting as group members.

Galtung claims to be the first scholar to distinguish two kinds of violence; physical violence and psychological/structural violence. He recognized that violence is not only about physical aggression: "If a person died from tuberculosis in the eighteenth century it would be hard to conceive of this as violence since it might have been quite unavoidable, but if he dies from it today, despite all the medical resources in the world, then violence is present, that is structural violence." (Galtung 1969: 168)

Under physical violence human beings are hurt somatically, to the point of dying.

There are essentially two kinds of physical violence: random violence, which describes small-scale acts of random or targeted violence, and coordinated violence, which describes actions carried out by armed groups such as the LTTE in Sri Lanka or UNITA in Angola, or even states such as Israel and Sudan. Actions carried out by a group or a state institution is based on massive mobilisation: "A large share of collective violence in the episodes that people call riots, rebellion, or revolutions directly involves governmental agents as purveyors or objects of change" (Tilly 2003:28).

One commonly understood meaning of violence is that it is physical and readily apparent through observable bodily injury and/or the infliction of pain. But as Galtung notes, it is important to recognize the existence of the other form of violence, structural violence, which is more indirect and insidious than observable physical violence. This structural violence is typically built into the very structure of social, cultural and economic institutions (Barash, Webel 2002:7).

Galtung made a further distinction between two levels of violence, the manifest and the latent (cf. Galtung 1969:172). Manifest violence, whether personal or structural, is observable. Latent violence, on the other hand, is not there, yet, but might easily come about (Ibid). It indicates situations of unstable equilibrium, where the level of actual realization is not sufficiently protected and the situation may easily deteriorate (Ibid).

To illustrate better, these concepts can be explicated in the context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. One cannot say that the latent violence is not applicable in

Israeli-Palestinian conflict, yet, this paper deals mostly with manifest violence which can be seen as a way of life for both Palestinians and Israelis, but from two different angles. The Palestinian struggle for self-determination includes loss of life in refugee camps, trouble at checkpoints, expansion of Israeli settlements, the Israeli defense wall¹, crowded prisons, a shattered economy, and a permanent fear for the future. Exposed to these permanent threats, extreme Palestinians chose the horrific violent method of committing suicide in order to remind Israelis that there is no peace unless both sides have the benefit of it. Israelis, on the other hand, are facing manifest violence in the form of threats and destruction from the Palestinian suicide bombs. While both Israelis and Palestinians accuse each other of threatening security, neither side is trying to analyze what prevents them from achieving the ultimate goals of peace and security. In this game, Israel as a power regime holds a position to redefine its policy toward the Palestinians in order to bring about security for both sides. Hence: "security has become 'an essentially contested concept' as Buzan argued" (Møller 1999:5).

Most people agree that war in general is a bad thing. Many disagree however about the justification for any particular war: "When it comes to peace, there is substantial disagreement about specific goals and the means to achieve it"(Barash, Webel 2002:8).

The notions of peace, violence and war are interdependent. One cannot suggest the achievement of peace with military capabilities, without taking into consideration, the use of violence. Once physical and structural violence take place, peace is transformed into conflict or war.

A state of peace, which refers to both absence of personal and structural violence, seems to be utopia so far. Galtung thus, identified 'positive peace' mainly with social justice. For brevity the formulations 'absence of violence' and 'social justice' may perhaps be preferred, using one negative and one positive formulation of peace. The reason for the use of the terms 'negative' and 'positive' is easily seen: "the absence of personal violence does not lead to a positively defined condition, whereas the absence of structural violence is what we have referred to as social justice, which is a positively defined condition implying egalitarian distribution of power and resources"(Galtung 1969:183).

¹ Israelis use the convenient and misleading term 'fence' to describe the system of fortifications that is currently being erected on Palestinian land in the West Bank. The term 'wall', more commonly used in foreign-language reports is also used in UN reports and by the International Court of Justice, as is also the term barrier. Therefore, I choose to use the term wall for the reasons that its purpose is to segregate land and people. The wall is eight meters high and does not look like a fence.

In the next section, this discussion of the theoretical concepts of peace, violence and conflict/war, are applied in the analysis of the role of these concepts in the Israeli and Palestinian discourse of conflict. It will become visible that perceptions of the conflict and of security differ between Israelis and Palestinians, and this also influences peace activism, dynamics of negotiations and a potential resolution to the conflict.

2.1.1. Security discourses of Israelis and Palestinians

In the conflict barometer 2004 of the Heidelberg Institute on International Conflict Research, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was classified as a conflict with contested issues such as secession, ideology/system and resources². When referring to this conflict, all sides inside and outside the region mostly use the term war rather than conflict. In this thesis, I will use the term conflict as it is classified by HIIK.

“In Israel, the value of peace is clearly subordinated and integrated into the value of security, and perceived in terms of a strategy to prevent war and achieve security” (Feige 1998:93). As far as state security is concerned, Israel’s minimum requirements surely include an absence of (serious) threats to the very survival of the Israeli state, to its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders (Møller 1999:6). However, when it comes to societal security, which by Waver et.al. (1993) is defined as an absence of threats to collective identities, this is a more complicated matter: “As much as the Palestinian demography and terror present a threat to Jewishness, the state of Israel with its military capabilities presents also a threat to Palestinian existence. How difficult is it then to cultivate something like a ‘dialogue of civilisations’ that would allow the two sides to view each other as a ‘different Other’ rather than a hostile one? (Møller 1999:7).

This ‘dialogue of civilisations’ and ‘us versus other’ dichotomy will be stressed further in the identity section. In order to understand better the identity boundaries in Israel and the conceptualisation of threats to identity, the concepts of security and militarisation must be taken into account: “Bar-Tal has identified and analysed several ‘functional societal beliefs’ developed by Israeli society that enable it to cope successfully with the trying circumstances

²The Heidelberg Institute on International Conflict Research HIIK, retrieved from http://www.hiik.de/en/index_e.htm on 21.04.2004

in this country (...) The core beliefs are: security as a supreme value, patriotism, national unity, visions of peace (a goal that engenders optimism and gives purpose to the struggle, without going into detail about how to achieve it), the perception of Israel's victimisation, a positive self-image (self-justification and belief that Israel's conduct is moral and humane) and delegitimization of the other side" (Ozacky-Lazar 2005:2).

Israel can be taken as an example of how war and militarism become a way of life. During the 57 years of its existence, the state of Israel was confronted by 5 wars with Arab neighbours, and faced a permanent struggle with the Palestinians. In the meantime, Israel faced a permanent fear and an existential threat from the neighbouring Arab countries. In general, Israelis consider security as a vital aspect of daily life. Militarisation has been a crucial factor in creating Israeli culture and identity: "to a considerable degree, the Israeli identity has been fostered by the conflict with Palestinians and Arab states. Continuously and in relations to the Israeli-Arab/Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, the orientation of the state has been geared toward 'security'" (Schulz 2004: 90).

In Israeli political debate, the concepts of war and peace are both reflected in the use of the notion 'security'. Speaking about 'security', the majority of Israelis are blaming Palestinian terrorism for the lack of it, instead of trying to find causes of why terror is happening and why their 'security' is at stake. Only a minority is concerned with this particular question of why the Palestinians chose terror to jeopardize Israeli's lives: "The majority of Israelis perceive the war as an ever-impending factor in Israeli security thinking. In other words, with or without a peace process Israelis still perceived war as waiting around the corner" (Hermann 1998:649).

Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, security has been and still is imperative for Israelis. Israelis perceive security as a primary task to be achieved. Israel has a unique historical and geo-strategic position, but officially no allies. The experience of Holocaust created an impetus for Israelis to turn on self-help doctrine, hence to never again rely on others for security. This is the key reflection of Israel's policy toward security in terms of self-help and self-defence. Outside observers often view Israelis as too preoccupied with their security and military behaviour. Yet, most outsiders believe this preoccupation is exaggerated and has little to do with objective geo-political circumstances: "Although unversed in international relations theory, most Israelis are political realists by instincts. They view their regional and international environment as an anarchic self-help

system in which their state is constantly threatened. Israeli leaders and the public cannot identify any trustworthy external power willing and able to guarantee their security and survival. Despite Israel's military strength, Israelis continue to see their nation as small, isolated and besieged by enemies, and thus they persistently project this self-image to the outside world" (Herman 1998:648).

But very often the self-help policy that Israel endorsed, caused more uncertainty, and perpetuated the circle of violence. It is useful to take into consideration the different perceptions of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Both sides, Israelis and Palestinians created their own narratives and truths: "In terms of discourses and images of the 'other', Israelis and Palestinians have surely portrayed themselves in monolithic and fixed categories. Both identities have been formed and reconstructed in a very direct entanglement with their perception of the 'other' "(Schulz 2004:90). Therefore, none of the sides make any effort to see what can be achieved. Rather, both sides prefer goal-oriented strategies.

The Israeli occupation of West Bank and Gaza is described by one of my informants who run the 'Organization Against Demolitions of Palestinian Houses' as a Palestinian struggle for freedom from structural violence; "In the morning hours of November 16th 1999, forces of the Israeli army entered several small cave villages in South Hebron hills and expelled over 700 Palestinian inhabitants. This did not occur in time of war, the Barak government, which we thought was trying to obtain peace, did it. When we started the struggle to return these inhabitants to their homes, it was not merely a struggle for human rights and justice. It was an issue that lies at the heart of the struggle for peace between our two peoples. (...) Israel defines the conflict as a battle between two sides and injury by fire. For the Palestinians, land confiscation and the building of settlements is an act of violence, as are also house demolitions, stealing water, the deportation of civilian population" (Informant 9). Apart from the physical violence that the Palestinians experience in their daily life, structural violence is in place. The Palestinians are excluded from all social benefits and rights including the basic right to live with dignity and freedom.

For the Palestinians the notion of security symbolizes the struggle to survive, to deal with the daily existential threats in broad terms. In the Palestinian territories, the lack of sustainable democracy, equality, respect of human rights, and other political and economic rights implies that structural violence is in place. Direct violence, both physical and structural, takes place on a daily basis. Direct physical violence is experienced when Palestinians are confronted with beating, injury, and often with indirect death, and when

Palestinian patients are not allowed to cross the Israeli checkpoints in order to reach hospitals. Structural violence is seen as an institutional violence when the majority of Palestinians have no freedom of movement because of the segregation with the wall, lack of identity cards and other documents, as well as lack of access to other social, economical and political benefits.

For the majority of Israelis, the conflict is far away from home. Israelis have no right to go to the occupied territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip unless they are IDF soldiers or settlers who live in settlements in occupied territories. Therefore, they don't know how the Palestinians live or what life threats they face daily.

Israelis and Palestinians face insecurity in two different ways. Palestinian terrorist attacks in Israel disturb peace. Terrorist attacks can cause human casualties and material damage and they are ongoing. This causes an existential threat to Israelis. Yet, if one takes the notion of peace to mean absence of war, then there is no war either. So there is a fragile peace.

The differences in how Israelis and Palestinians understand the ongoing conflict have consequences for the possibility of reaching compromise and approaching the problems: "The difference in the two sides' definition of conflict causes difficulty in reaching a cease-fire and peace. When Israel announces a unilateral cease-fire, it means an end to fighting, as it understands it. It does not include an end to settlement building, an end to land confiscation, an end to house demolitions and so forth. For the Palestinians, there is no cease-fire without a cessation of these things" (Informant 9). During the current Intifadah, which started in 2000, Israel has continued with massive land confiscation, settlement building, house demolitions, deportations, closures and sieges, all of which make life hard for the Palestinians.

Public discussion in Israel on peace and war focuses on the relationship between occupation of territories, security and peace. Therefore, there are two ways of thinking in Israel. A significant part of society rejects territorial compromise for peace, claiming that it is worth absorbing the consequences of war for holding land. They claim that security comes first, then peace or peace with strength. Once peace is achieved by force, there will be no more terror. Another view is that land must be compromised for the purpose of achieving peace. Thus, security in exchange for land is a win-win solution. Although Israel is a powerful state, the security uncertainty and constant existential threats implies anxiety about identity.

Israelis are reluctant to accept the Israeli Palestinians as equal citizens of Israel, instead they claim that Israel is a Jewish state, while calling the Palestinians within Israel, Israeli Arabs. When it comes to Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza Strip, the boundary created by Israelis between two identities such as 'us' the Jews and 'them' the Arabs is rather sharp. Israel continues to deny the existence of Palestinians as a nation, and this causes even deeper cleavages and identity crisis for both groups. This identity crisis is followed by the fear of losing freedom and security on both sides. Security though can be improved only if the principle of equal identity is recognized. This requires Israel as a powerful side in the conflict, to fulfil its obligations toward Palestinians such as withdrawal of IDF and settlers from occupied territories, compensation for the property of Palestinian refugees and settlement of the problem of water. Unless these conditions are met, the Palestinians will remain unsatisfied with their status and insecure about their future.

Perceptions of conflict in Israeli society may be changed only when security is improved. However, security cannot be improved if the identity of the 'other'- the oppressed group is not accepted and respected. Both conflicting identities need to be reconsidered and compromised, thus barriers to be broken in order for the perceptions to be changed.

Therefore, I now turn to a review of the concept of identity.

2.2. Identity and peace activism

There are many contributions to the formation of an identity. Some are physical, such as the color of one's skin or other physical features shared by a group of individuals. Others are purely imagined, such as political, nationalistic and religious characteristics, or language.

In context of various political, economic and socio-economic causes of conflict, peace researchers have identified that identity is a central part of conflict dynamism. In their attempts to bring about changes in society, peace activists reject nationalistic ideologies or regimes, which exercise power against subordinated groups, and seek for new identities. By opposing repressive regimes, peace movements distinguish themselves and form their own identity.

Peace movements around the world develop different identities. If the state is totalitarian or authoritarian, the movements strive to make clear where they stand and try to influence civil society in order to bring about change, or to build bridges between the state apparatus and ordinary people.

The domestic development and the level of conflict often influence the formation of peace movement's identity. In countries where inter-ethnic conflicts are ongoing, peace movements strive to construct dialogue and negotiation between conflicting parties. In countries where a dominant group is holding power and oppressing minority groups, peace movements also seek to balance their activities by not taking side. In this way they seek alternative identities, or a third identity. Although the formation of identity is complex, peace movements are seen to form identities that will balance between the dominant and subordinate groups, as a strategy for preventing violent conflict.

Civil society organizations attempt to change public attitudes toward the conflict and government. Non-state actors such as peace movements can make an important contribution to the prevention and transformation of conflicts by mobilizing people to act in accordance with a certain agenda. Through public debates, academic curricula, public speeches and negotiations, social movements communicate their agenda to a broader audience. In many situations, the civil society actors succeeded in preventing violence or reducing tension between conflicting parties or between dominant and subordinate groups. By being engaged in this manner, civil society actors strive to deconstruct identities or power systems: "In non-democratic societies, civil society actors can pressure for a peace process by lobbying politicians and representatives of the international community, by using the media or by mobilizing people for demonstrations and other highly visible forms of protest" (Orjuela 2004:49)

When people share experiences, conversations and emotional involvement in certain activities, they tend to shape common identities. Such processes of group identity formation are relevant also to peace movements: "Collective action for peace produces or strengthens shared identities and brings about polarization between 'self' and 'other'"(Orjuela 2004:25). The discourses of inclusion and exclusion create a distinction between friend and enemy, and does not allow for uncertainties or blurred identities. Unity requires strict boundaries between 'self' and 'other' (cf. Jabri in Orjuela 2004: 23).

Peace movements are ideally committed to an inclusive identity, and aim at dialogue, compromise and understanding. A peace movement, thus, needs to build its identity not as a rigid dichotomy between us and them, (good and bad), but with other types of boundary drawing (Orjuela 2004:73). But one can argue that the rightist movements, who promote nationalist ideologies, also maintain an inclusive identity, in order to gather more people in its circles. They do not prevent people from joining them.

Peace movements are often identified with an idealistic image of peace loving people opposed to elites. These actors keep contacts across divided communities and identities. As such, their activities represent a potential avenue for solution of the conflict, and thus, should be strengthened by outsiders who want to support peace. There is a dynamic effort of external and internal actors that play a role within the creation and organization of peace movements: "Movements are shaped by external factors such as relation to the state, counter-movements and other important actors"(Orjuela 2004:61). But movements are also shaped by internal factors such as resources, the structure of organization, leadership, how leaders relate to members and mobilize support, the motivation of members and participants, and the construction of shared identities (Ibid).

To better understand civil society peace work, Orjuela (2004:83) argues that we need to look at the complexities of civil society, the internal and external dynamics of peace movements and their form of organization. It has to be recognized that civil society actors have gone global, are increasingly linked internationally and act in global arenas (Kaldor in Orjuela 2004:58). This is because global interconnections have opened up new arenas for political and civic engagement: "When studying civil society in one state, one needs to also contrast it with supranational actors, as well as foreign governments (in their functions as donors, diplomats, or military powers)"(Orjuela 2004:58). As mentioned earlier, the identities of peace movements are not identical, but differ from country to country. In some countries civil society has better access to the international community and receives considerable support, while in other societies, such access may be denied or more difficult.

Despite the concern with inclusive and peaceful relations, there are a few reasons why peace movements may not be widely supported by people. For instance, peace movements are often seen as reflecting the basic values of a society since they consist mostly of middle class, educated citizenry, and are widely identified with a concept of peace 'brought' from

foreign countries. As such, peace making can seem to reflect hegemonic or dominating “western values” it faces the risk of being seen as not indigenous, but as foreign, i.e. as representatives of foreign views. Another problem that peace movements may face is a problem with taking clear stands in front of internal or external threats. Once confronted with wars, or when outsiders threaten the national interests, the collective identity of a peace movement can be automatically distorted or shifted into a loyalty for a country: “Regardless of the question of the correlation between real threats and the establishment of institutions and beliefs, the basic premise of civil militarism is that the state, society, and each individual are constantly under external threat” (Feige 1998:20).

Orjuela argues that social movement theory has contributed to the discussion of how and why movements arise and what their dynamics are. It is recognized that mobilization was most successful among people who had been previously organized, and that organizational structures, leadership and strategizing were crucial to the success of the movement (Orjuela 2004:59). With the so-called identity school, focus was moved away from strategy and national cost-benefit calculation for understanding social movements towards identity issues (Ibid). Actors in the movements were aware of their capacity to construct identities and to create solidarity through mobilization processes.

Because peace movements are faced with the challenge of mobilizing for peace, while also establishing a cohesive group identity, I will now take a closer look at how identities can be inclusive and exclusive.

2.2.1. Inclusive versus exclusive identities

The formation of identities within peace movements is often either encouraged by inclusive identities or challenged by nationalist identities. Orjuela argues that an analysis of the contradictory processes of polarization and cooperation between people from different identity groups in context of violent conflicts, and how identities are mobilized or reframed through peace work, will add to our understanding of how peace can be supported (Orjuela 2004:15). A key issue is whether it is possible to question and mobilize resistance against ethno-nationalist polarization, exclusivism and extremisms and to promote other ways of organizing, thinking and acting (Orjuela 2004:14). Identity formation involves practices of exclusion and inclusion also in peace movements. This may result in the polarization of

identities: “In any group of collective actors, drawing the circles that separate ‘us’ from ‘them’ is complex, and ultimately paradoxical. Stressing the commonality of the group’s experiences means that certain identities get exaggerated and others get excluded” (Taylor 2000:223).

Orjuela claims that the fact that people hold multiple identities, that the processes of construction of the ‘self’ in relation to an ‘other’ are flexible and context dependent, and that peace work also has to manoeuvre within identity politics, one seldom taken into consideration (Orjuela 2004:25). This suggests that a more nuanced and comprehensive approach towards identities and civil society peace work is required. This work is an attempt at doing that. Orjuela argues that most peace researchers and practitioners work with a simplistic and static notion of identity. Identity according to Orjuela, is most often treated either as irrelevant or as given (2004:78). Peace movements mostly adopt a conflict resolution approach and maneuver between different identities. By fostering multicultural understanding, it enhances communication between conflicting parties, thereby recognizing and accepting differences.

The task of maneuvering and seeking for new identities in peace movements is an ongoing process. It is important for their work because peace movements form an identity in order to organize their activities, thereby bringing together people with the same way of thinking, same goals and sharing the same values.

Two kinds of identities of peace movements can be identified: one is rightist identity that is based on nationalistic echoes and sometimes legitimized by state power, which may be inclusive and exclusive. A leftist movement’s identity, most often challenged by the rightist one, strive to deconstruct and ‘destabilize’ the rightist identity, thus foster dialogue between power elites and ordinary people who are excluded from the power structure. This identity is more inclusive. This general description of peace movements is adequate for my thesis since gives an explanation of what challenges leftist movements and how they strive to achieve peace by forming a new identity and including civil society actors.

Vera Taylor describes how movements act as pressure groups on behalf of people excluded from the dominant power structure and routine decision-making processes, and become crucial actors in bringing about social and political change (2000:220). Most often these collective efforts for social change occur in the realms of culture, identity, and

everyday life, as well as in direct engagement with the state (cf. Taylor and Whittier in Taylor 2000:221). Therefore, to be able to act collectively, the group must define and make sense of who they really are (Taylor 2000:222). According to Taylor and Whittier, the biggest dilemma of peace movements nowadays, is the boundaries that are created between the group and the dominant society, the dichotomy between ‘us’ and ‘other’. These boundaries can be easily found when oppressed groups fight against their suppressors. By forging a specific group identity, peace movements risk distancing themselves from civil society. Peace movements have to remain critical of their own identity, so that it does not exacerbate the conflict. A peace movement needs to see whom it excludes from its circles, because the basic values of the peace movement become especially clear when looking at its exclusionary mechanisms.

The motto “work locally and think globally” that many peace actors endorse explains the strategy of how the local work could have an impact on the global level. Think globally is an agenda suggested by a grassroots activism. But it is also meant to signal an emergent understanding of the basics of regional conflicts, which can gradually extend into international ones. Act locally, underlines the fact that making a better world for people and more social justice remains a profoundly local exercise. Internationally accepted ideas need to be taken up locally and translated into action at the provincial and community levels. This problematique, which is relevant to my research question in a way that examines the work of Peace Now locally and its impact in a large-scale peace work, would be further examined in the next section.

2.2.2. The dynamics of small-scale and large-scale peace work

Although peace activists aim to contribute to large-scale peace, they start peace work first in their home environments. Peace activists attempt to inform leaders, to make them listen, and ‘fight’ on behalf of people. This bottom-up approach to peace can be achieved when small-scale people organize in citizen groups or other NGOs and attend workshops, and protest in order to increase the awareness of people and seek dialogue or change. Because a small-scale conflict may trigger large-scale conflicts, Orjuela argues that good local relations can prevent an aggravation of conflicts elsewhere (2004:203). Another way for small-scale peace work to matter on a large-scale is by acting as catalyst of change by strengthening institutions, education, and transitional justice. Non-state actors can thus be critical to

peace-making because their activities can help to transform the conflict by intervening in the discourse of conflict (cf. Rupesinghe in Orjuela 2004:83).

Despite the theoretical potential of local peacemaking, the successes differ: "Although many social movements succeed in making a difference, social movements for peace are not per se a determining factor for generating peace agreements. At the same time, the work of social movements should not be underestimated. Different approaches to conflict resolution/transformation generate different criteria of success"(Orjuela 1004:63). For instance, a theory that focuses on the misperceptions among conflicting parties, as a cause of conflict will measure success in terms of increased understanding between the two parties. The peace strategy will aim at making the parties recognize each other and to pursue negotiations (Ibid). What is not clear according to Orjuela is how the internal and external criteria are interconnected. Orjuela presents three postulations: Firstly, small-scale peace work may affect the main conflict discourse by putting pressure on key actors such as leaders, by for example informing the constituencies and thereby leaving the leaders no choice other than to redefine their agenda. The second postulation is a bottom-up approach when focus is on work with ordinary people aimed at changing people's attitudes, and advocate non-violent struggle and support dialogue. The third postulation suggests that small-scale peace work matter on large-scale peace work when small-scale peace activists attempt to generate structural changes in the socio-political structures. Here the emphasis is on strengthening institutions or transforming the political model, and address issues such as exploitation, threats to identity and security. To change people's attitudes means also to change their way of acting. Based upon these postulations, the possible impacts of small-scale peace work on large-scale peace can be systematized theoretically into official (top-level) changes, local-level changes and the strength of the peace movement itself (generation of structural changes) (Orjuela 2004:67). This emphasis on micro-macro relation points to the need of looking at small-scale peace work in a broader context, by carefully analyzing the conflict situation and the activities carried out by peace movements. In specific case studies it can then be explicated how peace activists impacted the overall conflict discourse and eventually affected the political decision making processes.

In 1980s Peace Now succeeded in bringing together supporters and influence the decision making process, along with persuading government to change the course toward peace.

I now turn to analyze the polarization of identities within the Peace Now and what role identity plays in transforming Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

2.2.3. Peace Now identity dilemma

In this thesis the focus is on identity of Israel's largest and most influential peace movement, Peace Now. The role of Peace Now in constructing a group identity and challenging the power relations between the system and society is of main concern.

The practice of identity formation has been crucial to the work of Peace Now, but inconsistencies have also affected its work.

The question is: How does Peace Now distinguish itself from other peace movements and which values are key in its collective identity?

The political identity of Peace Now differs to a large extent from other peace movements in Western Europe, as well as in Israel. However, what Peace Now shares with other movements in Israel, is the claim to identity, which is expressed in the form of distinct group membership.

The position of Peace Now is somewhere between 'self' and 'otherness'. Other so-called radical movements in Israel such as "New Profile", "Yesh Gvul", the "Twenty-First-year", "Down with the Occupation", "Friendship", "Bridge for Peace" and "Women in Black" have crossed the boundary and become the 'other', that is 'Arab lovers' and 'traitors'. Peace Now's identity however, remains adaptable and somewhere in between. Peace Now has not crossed that boundary, instead its activists claimed that in order to be able to impose moral standards and seek peace, one should be 'there' in the field and witness the war. Peace Now strives to maintain a 'fluid' identity that moves from the margins to the center and vice-versa. A hybrid identity is an alternative identity that provides space for new positions to be formed. It is 'fluid' and 'dynamic'. "A 'hybrid identity' can imply both: assimilation to the hegemonic culture as well as resistance to dominant discourse"(Orjuela 2004:77). The assumption of this paper is that Peace Now is characterized by a constant search for a 'third space' in which new positions are formed. Its dynamic identity is thus crucial to Peace Now's work and this paper aim to illustrate how this has impact at the movement's work.

"The hybrid strategy or discourse "opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal"(Bhabha in Orjuela 2004:77). Furthermore: "Hybrid agencies find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty.

They deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, they give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy; the outside of the inside: the part in the whole” (Ibid). Therefore, ‘third space’ identity might serve to destabilize essentialist positions and provide a space to negotiate power relations (cf.Orjuela 2004:77)

In this section I have analyzed the concept of identity formation in peace movements and how the identities of peace movements can be polarized. In the second section I analyzed the linkages between small-scale and large-scale peace work and how they function in peace work. In the third section the possibility of creating a ‘new-hybrid identity’ or an ‘in-between-space’ identity of peace movements was discussed. I suggested that this level of dynamic is crucial to the comprehension of Peace Now’s work.

I will now, in chapter 3, use this analytical synthesis of identity formation, polarized identities and hybrid identities to examine Peace Now’s identity and what they stand for.

In a conflict characterized by essentialist distinctions of identity, the hybrid identity of Peace Now is a dilemma. It can be useful to establish inclusive dialogue, but this may also become ineffective because of its fluidity. A particular concern in this paper are changes in Peace Now’s identity dilemma during the second Intifadah that began in 2000. In the following chapter 3, I will examine the work of Peace Now in three phases, with a focal point on 2000-2004. My hypothesis is that since the beginning of the second Intifadah, many changes were introduced to the Peace Now identity dilemma, mainly fostered by the intensification of violence from both Palestinians and Israelis and the escalation of the political situation.

With this chapter I wanted to show that identity matters. Identity processes are reflected in the work of peace movements. If ethnicity is constructed, then the creativity of peace workers in challenging and influencing these constructs, matter a lot.

Prior to the empirical analysis in chapter 3, I now review the methodology of this analysis.

2.3. Methodology - An interpretative approach

During my six-week research trip to Israel in July and August 2004, I was based in Tel Aviv. This was because Tel Aviv was to some degree more secure than Jerusalem. From Tel Aviv I made frequent trips to Jerusalem and other cities in Israel including Ramallah in the West Bank, depending on where the informants were based.

I interviewed formally 22 informants for which I possess transcripts. However, I have discussed with many more activists during different vigils including informal conversations with people. This helped me to step back and critically analyse the situation and to form a mosaic of the political, historical and cultural spectre of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. My particular interest was to gain insight in peace activities of Israelis. Two other components that followed my interview process were crucial: “the ability to be flexible and open, and sensitivity to the words and actions of respondents” (Patton 2002: 490).

Therefore, as usually happens to people who conduct interviews in the field, after each interview, I felt there were other questions left unanswered which I missed to raise. I wanted to meet as many informants as I could, but my time was limited. I made sure to be able to contact informants for a clarification in a later stage and I have done that by email.

During the interviews, I let informants discuss the matters without restraint, yet, I steered interviews by telling them what I wanted to know. Since most informants had distinguished academic, political and personal backgrounds, I wanted to hear first their experiences in order to get a wider picture of their history and the dynamic of the developments. In spite of an un-structured interview process, I was mainly focused on gaining insight on what went wrong prior to and in particular after the second Intifadah 2000? The interview process covered in particular 6 topics; peace movements in Israel; existential threat for Israelis; the Wall/Fence; disengagement plan; the Oslo process and the second Intifadah.

I am aware that I cannot have complete objectivity while analyzing this material. But I hope that the empirical data that I established in fieldwork and later analyzed in chapter 4, will help to minimize subjectivity.

As Patton argues: “over the years, researchers have learned that a state of complete objectivity is impossible and that in every piece of research-quantitative or qualitative-there is an element of subjectivity. What is important is to recognize that subjectivity is an issue and researchers should take appropriate measures to minimize its intrusion into their analyses” (Patton 2002:488). Being politically aware and reflexive will help me also to take

the best approach in this paper, given that my focus was on Israeli peace movement and its disintegration during second Intifadah.

2.3.1. Interviews and Observations

During my fieldwork, I participated in peace events that took place at that time. I thought that by meeting those people and participating in some of the events organized by the peace movements or NGOs in Israel, I would be able to apply the method of participant observation. My aim was thus to conduct research in a real work setting, where I would be able to interact with people, participate discretely in their activities without trying to manipulate my informants. My informants were drawn mainly from academia, peace movements and NGOs. During the interviews, I listened and left the informants talking on the issues related to Israeli peace activism.

Eight of 22 informants were simultaneously Peace Now activists and worked mostly as academics. I spoke to a co-founder and the former spokesperson of Peace Now, and I interviewed the former Director General of Peace Now who currently acts as committee member in Peace Now. The other fourteen informants belong to the more radical left groups or movements such as: Gush Shalom, Bat Shalom and Women in Black, New Profile, Israeli Palestinian Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), Committee Against House Demolitions (CAHD). These activists also participate in Peace Now rallies in order to express their support and disparity with government policies. All informants were engaged simultaneously in other professional work. The Palestinians I met also belonged either to the peace camp or worked for educational centers with Israeli and Palestinian groups.

Among the questions put before the informants are: Why did the Peace block fail to persuade people to vote for the left? Why has the left become polarized? How are Peace Now-Meretz relations constituted? How is the cooperation within the peace camp or among different groups?

Furthermore, I wanted to understand how peace activists addressed the causes of the second uprising and its consequences. I was also interested in what the peace activists envision about the future; what they are ready to do in order to further the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians.

Since I had done interviews for many years in an extraordinary environment during the armed conflict in Kosovo (1996-1999), I was expecting the interview process in Israel to be much easier than the previous one, and I was right. I faced no difficulty in approaching peace activists, teachers or NGO leaders to have a meeting with me.

I made a choice to interview informants based on their previous and current activism that I found in the literature. Others were simply proposed by their colleagues and friends as in a "snowball technique". Each interview was arranged earlier by email or phone. I then visited most of them as pre-arranged in their environments, and each interview lasted at least 2 hours. There were interviews that lasted 6 hours.

Through communication with ordinary people on the beach, on buses and in cafes I had a chance to observe and take part in routine practices in Israel, which helped me to understand how Israelis perceive the conflict. I observed Women in Black vigils in Tel Aviv Square, and I visited the office of Jerusalem Link-Women for Peace in Jerusalem. I visited the office of "The Other Israel", Givat Aviva educational center in Benyamina, and I also traveled to the West Bank with an representative of an American NGO called "Seeds for Peace" which aims at bringing together Israeli and Palestinian children and young adults to build trust.

Using public transportation in Israel and crossing checkpoints in the West Bank were the most affecting moments I had during my research trip. To travel by public transportation in Israel is risky due to the constantly present danger of Palestinian terrorist attacks. Yet, I wanted to sense on my own the fear and insecurity that Israelis are faced with daily. Or in other words, to experience the price they are paying for the occupation of territories. During my visit to the West Bank and Ramallah I saw Jewish settlements, and Palestinians waiting in long queues to cross the checkpoints, and this had an effect on me. The picture of Israeli Defense Forces and checkpoints reminded me on Serbian checkpoints in Kosovo from the period of conflict, thus, this enabled me to understand the Palestinians suffering under the Israeli occupation and how they justify the terrorist means they are using to achieve their political goals.

2.3.2. Sources

In addition to interviews as a primary source, I am drawing on a wide range of literature. Secondary sources, such as academic books and journals, NGO reports, daily newspapers (Haaretz, Jerusalem Post, Maariv), Tikkun Magazine, Jerusalem Report (a bi-weekly magazine in English), Israeli radio (in English), international media articles and Internet sites have also been used in this study.

The selection of theoretical literature on civil society was made difficult because so much literature is available. Also the study of civil society pertaining in particular to peace making is however a relatively new area of interest and in particular the application of identity as an analytical concept is novel. This explains the particular reliance on Orjuela in section 2.2. The selection of literature on peace movements in Israel and its development was rather rich.

3. Case Study: Peace Now

3.1. History of conflict between Israel and Palestinians 1948-to present

Both Israel and the Palestinians claim that they have legitimate rights to remain on the territory of today's Israel, Gaza Strip and West Bank. Israelis claim that the Jews were there before the Roman Empire asserted their authority in the first century. Israelis also call on the Balfour Declaration (1917), in which the then colonial power Britain suggested the establishment of a home for Jews in Palestine. Finally, the horrors of the Second World War where 6 million Jews were killed in Nazi camps all over Europe, established a profound basis for the need of a Jewish state. The Palestinian Arabs, who lived on the territories on which the state of Israel was established in 1947, responded that they have lived in the area for many centuries and should therefore not be expelled (Nye 2003:174).

The conflict between Palestinians and Jews did not erupt when the Jewish immigrants settled in British Palestine nor when the United Nations Security Council adopted the partition plan in 1947. Nye argues that the conflict was already there (2003:174). The Zionist movement had become more organized during the latter half of the 19th century. Their agenda was the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine territory under British mandate, and displaced Jews around the world were encouraged to move to the Holy

Land.³ The first groups of emigrants came to the Holy Land at the beginning of the 20th century, and during the 1920s, immigration slowly increased: “By 1936, nearly 40 percent of Palestine was Jewish” (Nye 2003:174). In their post-1918 euphoria Zionist leaders hoped and predicted a much larger influx of Israeli immigrants, but most immigrants from Eastern Europe moved to the United States: “Nonetheless between the Balfour Declaration and mid 1926, some 100,000 Jews entered Palestine” (Morris 2001:107). The influx of emigrants led the Arab residents to riot. After the Second World War, the British Empire, exhausted militarily and politically from the two world wars and the decolonisation process in India, wanted to hand over the Palestine territory to the UN as soon as possible. External influences while not causing the conflict, determined the dynamic of the conflict. During World War I, the area that is now Israel and the West Bank was under Ottoman Empire, which was allied with Germany. In the peace negotiations, Jews argued in favor of a homeland: “But, Israel would never have been realized were it not for the tragic events in Europe with the rise of Nazism. Numerous historians have noted that World War I made Israel possible and World War II made it necessary” (Helsing 2004:142). While Britain had promised Arabs to restrict Jewish immigration, it was impossible to keep these promises after 1945, because of the general enthusiasm about the establishment of a Jewish state” (cf. Nye 2003:174). Therefore, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the partition resolution 181 on 29 November 1947. The Palestine partition plan allowed the formation of a Jewish state, which was to be created on a small part of the territory called Palestine, as most of the territory was to be allocated to the Arabs. Even then, there were concerns about the future relationship between Jews and Arabs. While the Jews were celebrating, the Arabs were preparing for war. Shimon Peres remembered: “I was standing alongside Ben-Gurion and I shall never forget his remark:” today they are dancing; tomorrow they will have to shed blood” (Peres 1995:68).“This was a classic conflict between two national movements claiming title to and vying for possession of the same land” (Rabinovich 2004:3).

The armed conflict erupted just a day after Independence Day on 14 May 1948 and since continued between the Jews and Palestinians and other Arab forces from Egypt, Syria, Trans Jordan later Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. The symbolic importance of the Holy Land, the geo-strategic position, and the Jewish question, made the conflict unique and never to

³ An influential pamphlet was “The Jewish State” (1896) by Theodore Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement in Basel, Switzerland, in which he argued for Jews to immigrate and form a Jewish state.

be seen as a local or regional, but as an international conflict. Both Arabs and Israelis sought international help for their causes. The Middle East was a focal point of the two superpowers. The Soviet Union supported the Arabs and the United States supported Israel.

From 1952 there were sporadic fighting going on. One cease-fire, but no peace treaties were signed. With the outbreak of the Suez crisis in 1956, involving the United States, Great Britain and France on the side of Israel, and the Soviet Union on the Arab side, the situation became very tense. The UN established a peacekeeping force aimed at separating Israelis and Egyptians, and managed to calm the situation. After a period of relative calm, border incidents between Israel, Syria, Egypt and Jordan increased during the early 1960s. The escalation of threats and provocations continued until June 5, 1967 when the Six-Day-War erupted. Syria claimed that Israel was massing troops on its border. This provided Egypt and Jordan with the excuse needed to sign a mutual defence pact. Fearing an Arab invasion, Israel attacked and defeated the forces of its Arab neighbours. As a result of the fighting, Israel gained control over Old Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula, and the West Bank. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) responded by adopting Resolution 242 of November 1967, in which it demanded Israeli withdrawal from occupied lands in exchange for peace and recognition: "But there were some deliberate ambiguities in Resolution 242: It did not say all territories, just 'territories', implying that some might not have to be returned" (Nye 2003:175). Its ambiguity concerned the status of Palestinians, who were not recognized as a nation but were described as refugees.

The 1972 assassination of the Israeli Olympic Team in Munich conducted by Palestinian commandos triggered Israeli counter attacks in the following years. Many analysts claim that the Israeli government at this time became so focused on capturing Palestinian terrorists hiding out abroad, that they didn't pay attention to external threats and attacks due to occur. In 1973 Egypt and Syria opened a coordinated surprise attack against Israel, while other Arab states helped with logistics.

This marked the beginning of the October 6, 1973 war that came to be known as the Yom Kippur War in Jewish Holy Day (Atonement day). Israel was attacked in the north by Syria

and Egypt advanced from south. Israel was caught off guard. It took a few days for Israel to mobilize its forces for a counter-attack.

The Yom Kippur war proved to be a catalyst for peacemaking. On November 19 and 20, 1977, Egypt's President Anwar Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin, met in Jerusalem. Sadat took risks by going to Israel, ignoring intense Arab opposition both at home and abroad: "Meeting Begin in Jerusalem was seen as the catalyst for Sadat's assassination in 1981, but it also laid the groundwork for the Camp David talks, which began the following year and culminated in the agreement of 1979" (Thornton 2005:3).

While the Israeli government was determined to achieve peace with Egypt and resolve once and for all the southern border, the relations with Lebanon over the northern border were escalating. The Israeli role in the Lebanon civil war was to some extent a continuation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. There were major Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, and Hamas arranged attacks on Israel from Lebanon. Muslims in Lebanon were also allied with the Palestinians and soon violence between Christians and Muslims erupted:⁴ "A bomb set off by a member of the Muslim, a pro-Damascus National Syrian Socialist Party, killed the leader of the Phalangists, Bashir Gemayel on September 14, 1982. The Phalangists subsequently attacked Palestinian refugees in the two southern Lebanese camps of Sabra and Shatila, which became a worldwide known attack on the Palestinian refugee camps on September 16-18,1982" (Friedman 1998:161). Israeli forces were aware of the planned attacks, but no action was taken. Later, a Kahan investigation committee was established, and subsequently, Ariel Sharon-at that time Defense Minister was forced to step down and impeached for indirect responsibility for the Sabra and Shatila massacres in Lebanon. Some Israeli officers even conveyed this information to their superiors, but they did not respond.

Stung by hostile world reaction to its policies in Lebanon and as a result of reactions to the 1982 incidents, Israel pulled out its forces from southern Lebanon in February 1985. Israeli civil society also began to protest for the withdrawal of troops from Lebanon. On the other side, some young Palestinians frustrated that there was no solution to their problems

⁴ Christian Lebanese-Maronites have been the majority population in Lebanon since 1700s, but by 1970 rapid demographic growth among Lebanon's Muslims had changed this. Because the Maronites did not want to share power with other Muslim groups, they formed private armies. Most notable among them were the Phalangist militia, originally founded by Pierre Gemayel and later led by his son Bashir Gemayel (Friedman 1989:13).

and no one was aware that they are suffering, decided to take steps and planned counter-attacks on Israel. When the first Intifadah (uprising) began in December 1987, it was not exactly clear what was happening. Even the Palestinian authorities, who were not behind the uprising, were taken by surprise. It was a bottom-up revolt of youth, in which: “the early demonstrations of the uprising were initiated by school-age Palestinians whose political sentiments had been shaped by involvement in politicized student and youth organizations and by the absence both of any experience of life prior to the occupation and of hopes for a better future” (Alin 1994:489). It was triggered, though not caused, by a car crash in which four Palestinians were killed by an Israeli vehicle in December 1987. Hundreds of Palestinians turned on Israeli troops stationed in the Gaza Strip’s largest refugee camp of Jabalya, and demonstrations and riots spread to other refugee camps. In its contemporary meaning in Israel, Intifadah refers to the strikes, riots, demonstrations and violence carried out against Israel in the Gaza strip and the West Bank. The Palestinian demonstrations in 1987 were not only alarming Israeli security forces and government but the whole world. It was not terrorism, nor a full scale “armed struggle”, but a civilian uprising. This prompted the Israeli government to rethink their approach to negotiations with Palestinian representatives.

In 1991 the US-American administration succeeded in convincing Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to participate in a conference in Madrid to discuss future regional cooperation: “As a requirement for their participation, Israel demanded that the PLO did not take part. For that reason, Palestinians had no formal representation but participated as part of a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation” (Rabinovich 2004:35). Not much was achieved at this particular conference. Yet, a path was opened for Israelis and Palestinians, and for Israel and Arab states to pursue negotiations. It is now well established, that Madrid 1991 led to the establishment of a secret channel of negotiation between Israelis and the PLO, under the auspices of Norway.

3.1.1. History of negotiations 1993-2004

In 1992 the Norwegian government, who were in reasonably good terms with both parties, initiated talks that lead to The Declaration of Principles (DOP) on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. The main architect behind the plan was the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs (1992/93) Johan Jørgen Holst, Terje Rød-Larsen and Mona

Juul. Negotiations were undertaken in total secrecy in and around Oslo, with the breakthrough meetings taking place in the home of Minister Holst.

A Declaration of principles was signed on August 20, 1993, followed by a public ceremony in Washington D.C. on September 13, 1993. The two groups signed Letters of Mutual Recognition in which the Israeli government recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of Palestinian people while the PLO recognized the right of the state of Israel to exist and renounced terrorism, violence and its desire for the destruction of Israel. This was a major achievement. The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, the official name of the Oslo Accords seemed to mark a crucial period on the Israeli-Palestinian 50 years of conflict, which many believed never would be resolved. But today, 12 years after the Oslo process was initiated, this process seems to have been a too optimistic attempt from the Israeli government and the PLO.

“According to the Declaration of Principles (DOP), Gaza and Jericho were first to become governed by Palestinians. Further negotiations were to be based on UN resolutions 242 and 338, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip were seen as the thorniest issues (Jerusalem, refugees, settlers, borders and security) were left for permanent status negotiations” (Schulz 2004:91).

Palestinian self-rule has since 1995 been expanded in the West Bank, and today is established in about 42 percent of the territory of West Bank and Gaza “(cf. Schulz 2004:92). The majority of the population supported the process, but implementation proved difficult due to the actions of hardliners on both sides that disagreed with the outcome of the Oslo Accord.

For many Israelis, the period from 1993 when the Oslo Accord was signed until 2000 was a period of hope or as Shimon Peres put it, a “New Middle East”. During this period, the Israeli economy and tourism expanded, also the international community enhanced diplomatic and economic relations with Israel. But Israel continued to double the number of settlements and outposts and demolish the houses of the Palestinians. From the Palestinian point of view, the Oslo Accords were disappointing due to the economic collapse and high unemployment rate. But there were also internal struggle within the Palestinian authority and society. Palestinians failed to keep promises during Oslo and to stop the "armed struggle" against Israel, and to punish those Palestinians who violate the

commitment to peaceful resolution of conflict. The international community, who promised financial help, also presented many financial restriction and conditions that the Palestinian authorities could not fulfill, but also there was the lack of full donor commitment on the part of various members of the international community: "Security cooperation was a corner stone in the agreements. Israel was to trust the newly established Palestinian police and security apparatus, consisting of former guerrilla activists, for security assistance. Israel was to give up territory, while the Palestinians were to give up some of their claims and assist Israel in security affairs" (Schulz 2004:92). This was the most sensitive task, and Israelis never trusted the Palestinians especially when in regard to their assistance of Israel in security matters. As a consequence of the lack of fulfillment of the interim agreement, Likud and other rightist parties blamed the leftist government for providing power to the Palestinians, which power was used as a backlash against the Israelis after the second uprising.

On the Palestinian side, while the authorities tried to gain results from negotiations, in order to enhance the relationship with the US, the opposition groups on the ground wanted PLO to produce more than negotiations. Struggles among militant groups who were calling for reforms within PLO grew. In 2000 several clashes took place in Ramallah between Palestinian opposition and PLO police forces: "The Israeli opposition took a step further when in July 2000 just before the Camp David negotiations, Israel failed to release the prisoners as promised and this angered the Palestinian opposition forces, which for the first time cooperated closely with Jihad and Hamas, in achieving Israeli concessions on the refugee issue"⁵ Prime Minister Barak while interested to impose his plan on the Palestinians, continued the expansion of settlement. Palestinian authority on the other hand, during the Camp David summit in July 2000, was forced to negotiate permanent status issues with only 42 percent of the territory under its full or partial control (cf. Hammami, Tamari 2001:7). The Israeli government wanted to show that it was Palestinians who did not accept the offer, and Barak wanted to go directly to final status: "According to a recent analysis by an Israeli historian, the actual aim of Israelis participation in Camp David was to create a crisis that would undermine the results by inviting Palestinian rejection" (Hammami, Tamari 2001:10).

⁵ Lecture by Menachem Klein, Advisor to the Israeli Delegation to the 2000 Camp David Summit, given in Washington, 11/2/02.

The Origins of Intifadah II and Rescuing Peace for Israelis and Palestinians. Retrieved from: http://www.fmep.org/analysis/klein_origins_of_Intifadah_II.html, on 21..01.2005

“After the Camp David talks, the situation was characterized with uncertainty; “The visit by opposition leader Ariel Sharon to Temple Mount in Jerusalem on 28th September 2000 was interpreted as a direct challenge, which triggered the second uprising.”⁶

By 2002, the suicide attacks of Palestinian bombers in Israeli cities were not to be tolerated anymore. The Israeli public: “aware of the effectiveness of the security fences around the Gaza Strip, the Lebanese border, and the Jordan Valley in preventing infiltration, wanted a similar fence to stop terrorists from entering Israel from the West Bank” (Brom 2004:4). Within the Israeli public, among both the left and the right, there is broad consensus regarding the need for the wall. The legality of the wall is disputed, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) criticized it on 9 July 2004: “The United Nations, and especially the General Assembly and the Security Council, should consider what further action is required to bring to an end the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall and the associated régime, taking due account of the present Advisory Opinion.”⁷

The Geneva Initiative was the only effort of the Israeli opposition on the left during the last four years to bring the two sides to the negotiation table. It has opened the path for reconsideration of further negotiations with Palestinian authorities. The Geneva Initiative (GI) is a joint Israeli-Palestinian effort by leftist politicians, academics, writers and supporters of peace suggesting a detailed model for a peace agreement to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even PM Ariel Sharon, who never before had shown interest in compromising with the Palestinians, now realized that this is the only way to peace. Throughout his campaign to promote the disengagement plan Sharon stated that: “if we did nothing, Geneva would fill the vacuum, it was the Disengagement Plan or Geneva”.⁸ Although the Geneva Initiative did not succeed in implementing the peace plan, based on this initiative and its impact, the Sharon unilateral disengagement plan from Gaza Strip is taking place.

Palestinians argue that the Second Intifadah forced the international community to acknowledge the suffering of Palestinians. At the same time, the second Intifadah also gave

⁶ Ibid

⁷ International Court of Justice, the Hague, Netherlands. Retrieved from: <http://www.icj-cij.org/icjwww/idocket/imwp/imwpframe.htm>: on 25.04.2005

⁸ Geneva Initiative, Ending The Israeli Palestinian Conflict, retrieved from http://www.heskem.org.il/PagesEn.asp?page_id=8: on 14. 02.2005

the Palestinians the second name- the terrorists, and isolated Arafat in the international community for his support of terrorism. In essence, negotiations reached a stalemate. Palestinians continued to carry out various forms of terrorist attacks against the Israeli army (IDF) and civilians. Israelis have responded with more sophisticated weapons against Palestinian civilians and spiritual leaders. Key issues, still unresolved, are the borders of the Palestinian State, Jewish settlements, Palestinian refugees, status of Jerusalem and water. Security on both sides is at stake.

3.2. The emergence of peace movements in Israel

Before I focus particularly on Peace Now, I review other peace movements in Israel since there are many. A brief overview of them will help in better understanding the context within which Peace Now's unfolds.

In the Israeli context, the pro-peace groupings and the forces of the "left" are considered identical. Since Shinui and the majority in the Citizens Rights Movement (CRM) considered themselves militant liberals and rejected any kind of socialist orientation, it would be incorrect, formally speaking, to consider these two parties part of the Zionist left. However, real-life politics seems to have decided that "left" in the Israeli context means a principled readiness for compromise with the Palestinians and the Arab countries (Kaminer 1996:46).

The history of social movements in Israel dates back even before the establishment of the state in early 1950s. The emergence of peace movements in Israel was triggered by the determination of certain right wing members of Israeli government to expand Jewish settlements in the land where Palestinians were living. This policy was practised particularly after the Six Day War 1967 when Israel conquered new territories and settlements were established. With growing tensions between Israel and neighboring countries and permanent existential threat of war, Israeli civil society was alarmed by the lack of a peaceful strategy by the government. This prompted the Israeli public to seek for alternative ways of expressing revolt, and soon the peace movement appeared in the scene and expanded vis-a- vis radical rightist movement.

In this section I will not be able to consider all peace movements in Israel since some of them were active only in a short period of time and were expanded into bigger movements that emerged after the Lebanon civil war in 1982. But I will focus on those movements that were active and triggered public activism demanding the Israeli government to establish dialogue with the Palestinians.

From 1948 to 1967, Israeli prominent left and right leaders were primarily preoccupied with building the state and keeping an open eye on the borders and the security of the country. A small number of individuals realised that without recognizing the right of the Palestinian to exist as a nation, there will be no peace and no secure borders of Israel. One of the first people to raise the question of Palestinian recognition was Uri Avnery- a controversial publicist who never stopped advocating that only two state solutions with Palestinians will bring about security to Israelis. He was the one who in the early days of the establishment of the Israeli state, criticized the aggressive defense policies of Ben Gurion after the UN adoption of the partition plan, by emphasizing that the Jews and Palestinians were destined to coexist on the same land whether they liked it or not.

After the Six Day War in 1967, Israel conquered large territories such as the Gaza Strip from Egypt, Golan Heights in the North from Syria and the West Bank from Jordan, which was inhabited by more than a million Palestinians. Israel then decided to establish settlements on these territories. This move was widely criticized in the Israeli public in particular from professors and intellectuals mainly at Hebrew university. As a response to the government's settlement plan, the first peace movement in Israel was established by academics in July 1, 1968 during a conference in Tel Aviv University, called a Movement for Peace and Security. The activists, demanded that the government: "declare unequivocally that the State of Israel does not intend to annex territories, and adopts the principle of evacuation of administered territories as a result of peace agreements based upon agreed and secure boundaries" (Bar-On 1996:52).

The Movement for Peace and Security defined its role on three levels: "as a counterforce to the growing extra-parliamentary activities of the Israeli right; as a direct lobby to try to influence the government's policies; and as an educational and informational tool to influence public opinion" (Bar-On 1996:60). The movement argued that every attempt of the Israeli government to legitimize the annexation of new territories would undermine the

idea of a Zionist state (cf. Kaminer 1996: 10). In the following years, movement continued to pressure the government to change its policy toward occupied territories. Its biggest success was the influence they made on public opinion as they encouraged people to express their ideas freely. This opened a path for more peace movements to come in forthcoming years. During the 1970s there was a dramatic rise in street protests in Israel, and in this environment, more peace movements were established.

The shock that Israeli public faced after the Yom Kipur War in 1973, prompted a large-scale antigovernment protests that were focused entirely on security issues and foreign affairs. A leading person in these protests was Motti Ashkenazi, a former reserve officer: "He demanded the resignation of the then minister of defence Moshe Dayan and the establishment of an inquiry to examine the military mismanagement of the Yom Kipur War in 1973" ((Bar-On 1996:75). Soon other people joined Ashkenazi's vigil, and within a few days various groups began protesting in the streets and named movement 'Our Israel-The Movement for Change': "the movement's goal was to reform the electoral system and to strengthen public control over bureaucracy. Most protesters were upper-middle class and well-educated people with a substantial stake in the existing society"(Ibid).

Gush Emunim (Hebrew: "Block of the faithful") was an Israeli political movement that sprang out of the conquests of the Six-Day War in 1967, though it was not formally established as an organization until 1974, in the wake of the Yom Kippur War. It encourages Jewish settlement of land they believe God has allotted for Jews, hence, they argue in favor of an expansion of Israeli sovereignty to these territories. Gush Emunim was closely associated with and highly influential in National Religious Party (NRP), which is identified with religious Zionism. Gush Emunim built a new settlement in West Bank and Gaza Strip after the Yom Kippur War. Peace Now, which was established in 1978, opposes the expansionist goals of Gush Emunim and argues that greed for "Greater Israel" could sabotage the chances for peace. Gush Emunim and Peace Now are as such the two large opposites among the peace movements in Israel. The objective of Gush Emunim is to change the reality in and on the land in West Bank and Gaza Strip by creating settlements.

With the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, civilians and some IDF soldiers demonstrated against the mistaken war that was going on in neighboring Lebanon; "Consequently, during the summer of 1982, a new group called Yesh Gvul ('There is a limit') in Hebrew, was gathering signatures on a petition to the prime minister to "count

them out” of the war against Lebanon (Kaminer 1996:36). Reservists who refused to serve in Lebanon formed another organization. Many soldiers were sentenced to military prison for refusing to participate in the war in Lebanon. Parents were organized as ‘Parents Against Silence’, but the group stopped short of advocating refusal to serve in Lebanon. When 600 Israeli soldiers died in Lebanon in January 1985, it was mainly Yesh Gvul, which remained active on the protest scene: “Refusal had even spread to the kibbutz movement” (Kaminer 1996:39). Peace Now’s ambivalent attitude at the beginning of the war in Lebanon lead parents of soldiers to join Yesh Gvul. Later Yesh Gvul extended refusal activities from Lebanon to the occupied territories. Yesh Gvul is unique among the Israeli peace movements due to its goal and objection to serve in the occupied territories. Yesh Gvul made it very clear that there is no moral dilemma to serve or not to serve in the army. One should refuse to serve in wrong wars such as Lebanon war and in occupied territories they claim, even for the price of being sentenced and excluded from society.

The end of the war in Lebanon (1987) and the twenty years anniversary of occupation (1967) of West Bank and Gaza Strip caused the establishment of two more radical leftists movements. The first movement was Dai La’kibbutz, which can be translated as “End the Occupation” formed in June 1987. Six months later the first Palestinian Intifadah began and Dai La’kibbutz routine activity was impressive by doing weekly visits to the villages, refugee camps and hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However: “even at the highest point of its activity, Dai La’kibush never became a formal organization”(Kaminer 1996:50). Meanwhile hopes for a new and significant stage in the protest were centered on a new formation, the “The Twenty-first Year”. The organization was born during the twenty-first year of the occupation in 1987. The movement launched a new manifest, the Covenant Against the Occupation, in which it argued that the occupation was a pain to Israel.

In wake of the first Intifadah, a prominent women’s peace movement emerged in 1988, the Women in Black. They group initiated weekly vigils that became a landmark not only in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, but also all over the world. Women in Black was never established as a formal organization, but its gathering became autonomous.

Whenever peace protests are organized, the peace movements draw upon the numerous other NGOs in Israel. The proliferation of groups within the peace camp has reached a new peak. A preliminary list by the International Institute of Social History (IISH) of Israeli

peace movement 1987-1999, divides movements and organizations according to its objectives and goals (cf. Haag, Keller 1999:14). According to this list, only in Israel without mentioning the joint Israeli-Palestinian groups, currently 13 peace movements hold activities, 7 conscientious objectors movements, 11 academic and student movements, other human rights and religious organizations.

Yet, one can ask does this remarkable proliferation signify greater interest in peace, or simply greater disunity within the peace camp's ranks? Cleavages within the peace camp have deepened since the first Intifadah began in 1987. However, Peace Now remains the mainstream movement and the only one that relies upon constant action by dozens of people, and then upon a broad periphery of many thousands, which gave the movement a mandate to represent them. It is therefore particularly interesting to study the inner dynamics of this movement. As Bar-On acknowledges: "the Peace Now's simultaneous strength and weakness is that it comes from the mainstream of Israeli society rather than the margins. IDF reserve officers have remained at the center of its leadership. Its mainstream character has allowed it to construct a mass base far greater than rival 'fringe' movements, such as Yesh Gvul or Women in Black" (Robinson 1998:2).

I now turn to the case study of this particular peace movement.

3.3. Peace Now

3.3.1. Formative years 1978-1982

The formation of the movement Peace Now was prompted by the nearly failure of Israeli-Egyptian peace talks in 1978. When these talks were at stake in 1978, a group of 348 reserve officers and soldiers from the Israeli Army's combat units gathered more than 350 signatures on March 7, 1978 (Kaminer 1996:22). When the letter was sent to Begin, then the Prime Minister of Israel, calling upon the government to make sure for peace not to be lost, tens of thousands of Israelis sent in support for the organization in the term of 'letter writing'. Soon a campaign for gaining additional signatures was launched, thus served as an organizational momentum for the establishment of a movement, which came to be known as Peace Now: "By the end of March, the organizers announced that 10,000 Israelis had signed the letter" (Kaminer 1996:23). Peace with Egypt meant to Israel peace with, at that

time, the most significant Arab enemy. That is why this moment was crucial for all Israeli citizens to support the letter written by Peace Now activists.

On April 1, 1978, an unprecedented crowd of 40,000 people participated in the first large Peace Now demonstration, the movement used the next months to build a mass base and shape its policy orientation, launching over thirty activities including smaller demonstrations, petition drives and happenings to keep its name and message before the public: "In culmination of these efforts, on September 2, 1978 on the eve of Begin's trip to Camp David, Peace Now rallied approximately 100,000 Israelis in Tel Aviv. The battle by Peace Now to ensure the success of the Sadat initiative was the first instance in Israeli politics where the intervention of an extra-parliamentary peace movement had a clear and decisive influence on the course of critical political developments" (Kaminer 1996:24).

From the outset, Peace Now had two policy orientation goals. First, that Israel must and could work towards a fulfilment of the national rights of Palestinians. The second goal focused on the national imperatives of Israel, i.e. the recognition of Israel's existence, reduction of violence and terror by Palestinians. This process of recognition between Israeli and Palestinian was supposed to be reciprocal. Peace Now realised very soon that it missed a counterpart because at that time there were no Palestinian pro-dialogue organized groups. Peace Now then initiated a dialogue and put pressure on Israeli policy makers to begin negotiations with the Palestinians. The discrepancy on what Peace Now and other peace movements wanted and the response they got from the Palestinian side did not create an atmosphere of mutual trust. Israeli society was accurately observing the outcome of the Peace Now activism and how the Palestinian will behave: "Cooperation with individual moderate Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza has also been sporadic. Granted, such cooperation has often been impeded by obstacles erected by the Palestinians themselves, who are reluctant to cooperate with a mainstream Israeli movement"(Kaufman 1988:76). Despite their consistent difficulties with establishing a dialogue, Peace Now proved to be fruitful in terms of making an impact on domestic politics.

From the time of formation in late 1978, Peace Now took a stand to assure Israelis that they associated themselves with mainstream Zionism. This ideological outline helped Peace Now to expand its circles outside Israel and associate with other friends in Europe and the United States. This was crucial to the movement since it showed a connection with Jewish

Diaspora, which in turn, helped the movement financially, to grow and gain more legitimacy and support in domestic as well as in the international arena.

During the movement's formative years (1978-1983) this group numbered some 500 members, mostly well-educated middle and upper-middle class Israelis, born parents of an Ashkenazi origin: "Peace Now structure was made up of three circles. The central circle was comprised of 'activists' who participated and planned the group's activities. The second circle was made up of 'Loyal participants' who attended all Peace Now demonstrations. This circle often included between 5000-6000 people, while the third and larger circle was made up of 'sympathizers'-people who occasionally joined demonstrations or signed petitions" (Bar-On 1996:103). In this period the main thrust of Peace Now activity after the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty was devoted to a running battle against Gush Emunim, the political arm of the settler movement, which used every means, legal and illegal to take over land in the territories. Peace Now succeeded in building mass opposition to the settlement drive: "Peace Now argued that Israel must not keep the territories or prolong the occupation indefinitely, not only because of the moral and ethical danger it posed to Israel, but also from a pragmatic, security conscious standpoint"(Norell 1998: 134). Due to the fact that the movement's membership has military background, its members strived to avoid as being regarded as left-wing ideologues: "From the outset, Peace Now has striven to be perceived as an integral part of the Israeli mainstream and consensus. To this end, the movement emphasizes its role as a patriotic interpreter of the true Zionist spirit"(Kaufman 1988:66). During the first decade of existence, Peace Now decision-making processes were decentralized: "The movement's work strategy was at a voluntary nature, which in Israel precludes any paid staff positions"(Kaufman 1988:69).

3.3.2. Involvement in settlement of Lebanon War 1982-1988

After the first Peace Now "success" and satisfaction with the outcome of the Sadat-Begin meeting which led to the Peace Accord, Peace Now continued its activities to watch and oppose the construction of settlements. In these efforts, Peace Now was opposed by Gush Emunim movement, which continued to settle on as much territory as it could in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

As discussed earlier, Peace Now was extremely cautious about the Palestinian question. Its pragmatic position was centered on peace with the existing Arab countries to be achieved

on the basis of territorial compromise, but it was not keen to tackle the Palestinian problem per se: "Even after the breakdown of the autonomy talks between Israel and Egypt (1978-79), Peace Now had no clear stand on Palestinian self-determination"(Kaminer 1996:30). This is even more visible in an ambivalent standpoint in the platform of Citizens Rights Movement (CRM), a party formed by Peace Now initiators and massively supported by Peace Now members. The statement includes the line; "we recognize the right of Palestinian self-determination (...) we don't specify what it means. We don't say no to Palestinian state, we don't say yes, its' not up to us to decide what the Palestinians want" (Bar-On 1985:82-83). Peace Now, according to Bar-On is a vast movement, has a different wording, but, it essentially stick on to the same kind of approach: "not to preempt any particular configuration of the ultimate agreement, but there is the basic understanding that no arrangement would be tenable in the Middle East unless the Palestinians considered the arrangement to the satisfactory for them as a nation"(Bar-On 1985:82-83). However, it was the Palestinian uprising that convinced Peace Now and other Israelis that they have to deal with Palestinians too if they want peace.

On June 5, 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon. "Israel's objective in the Lebanon civil war was to destroy the military and socio-economic infrastructure that the Palestinians had created there"(Kaminer 1996:35). Just after two weeks of fighting Peace Now posed the questions: "why are we killing and being killed in Lebanon" (cf. Kaminer 1996:35). It was another war waged without political consensus. Peace Now soon organized protests against this war. The situation deteriorated, and the reputation of Israel was hurt, as an attack on two refugee camps became publicly known, as noted in the history section (p 34). This event triggered large Peace Now protests around the country and succeeded to provoke the vast majority of Israeli society to demand from the government a serious response to the loss of soldiers since the beginning of the civil war in Lebanon.

From the end of the Lebanon war (1985) until the first uprising in 1987, Peace Now was not very much active in the streets. During this period, Peace Now was struggling to find its identity either to be a parliamentary or extra-parliamentary force. What deepened and restrained Peace Now ambiguous stand was also the first Palestinian Intifadah: "The movement displayed ambivalence and hesitation, being torn between support for many of the Palestinians claims and feelings of solidarity with Israeli soldiers facing the revolt" (Feige 1998:91).

The first Intifadah or the Palestinian “war for independence from Israel” was a political struggle, and it was then that the Palestinians for the first time demanded self-government. The Intifadah erupted in late 1987 and changed the situation on the ground. The revolt of Palestine’s youth was expressed by throwing stones and occasionally Molotov cocktail at IDF soldiers. At this time Israelis started to understand that the Palestinian problem would not be resolved with military means, even though the then Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin was convinced that the uprising can be oppressed by force. The first Intifadah reminded Israelis to think profoundly about their actions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: “In contradiction to the struggles concerning peace with Egypt and the war in Lebanon, where Peace Now defined itself as representing the soldier-as-victim, the Intifadah required a more subtle formulation” (Feige 1998:103).

Peace Now at this time continued with major demonstration that sometimes reached 100,000 participants. The aim was to push Prime Minister Shamir and his government to accept peace initiatives proposed by the US government: “Just then, more Israelis sensed that Palestinian self-determination was not just one of the aspects of the Israeli-Arab conflict but its very core” (Kaminer 1996:31). Peace Now and most of Israelis realized that for peace you have to pay a price, and the price is to give up the occupied territories. By now, Peace Now was active not only within Israel, but wanted to draw attention of peace supporters outside Israel as well.

According to Galia Golan, one of the cofounders of Peace Now, in 1986 Peace Now had three basic objectives abroad: “One is to inform the Jewish public of opinions inside Israel and the fact that there are views different from those of the current government. Secondly, Peace Now aims to engage the Jewish public in debate, inasmuch as the government claims to speak in the name of the Diaspora, we feel that the Diaspora should make its views known too, and the third task abroad for Peace Now is to provide a focal point of identification with Israel for the large number of Diaspora Jews and particularly young people” (Yehiel 1986:176).

Most cofounders of Peace Now were a generation that grew up mostly in kibbutzim with a Zionist visionary ideology to sacrifice all for their ideals: “It was not really a membership organization and there were no elected local or national bodies. At this phase, the movement’s decisions evolved on the basis of constant attempts to create a consensus” (Kaminer 1996:115). Since the movement was lacking formal decision-making bodies, the

leaders informally decided what steps to take further or what not: "In absence of annual conferences, periodic reporting back to the membership and the need to ratify basic strategy, all weakened the individual members sense of belonging and responsibility to one entity"(Kaminer 1996:116). The movement lacked of charismatic leadership, and applied a weak strategy, which failed to involve in its circle.

But whatever its defect and Peace Now's lack of organizational structure, the movement was a clear expression of political mood and revolt in Israel and during the late 1980s, early 1990, it succeeded in translating that mood into actions and political protest.

3.3.3. Peak: Peace Now involvement with Knesset 1988-1995

Toward the end of 1989 the leaders of Peace Now asked to meet Yitzhak Rabin, then Defence Minister, to convince him to accept an invitation for negotiations with PLO. Rabin showed quite unchanging mind in this issue. Rabin was preparing for his departure to the US in December 1989. Peace Now organized a "farewell party" as they had done to Begin earlier: "In Rabin's departure to Washington, around 1000 demonstrators turned up and demanded that he agree to negotiate with the PLO"(cf. Kaminer 1996:117). While Rabin was gone, Peace Now activists intensified its activities in the West Bank and continued to meet Palestinian activists, but they were careful not to meet PLO representatives. Secretly, however negotiations were on the way, but Peace Now knew nothing about it.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway organized the secret negotiations that were going on between Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), but the public was not informed about the details. Furthermore: "as Peace Now had discovered during previous campaigns, the months before an election are un-favourable for extra-parliamentary activities" (Bar-On 1996:295). With the help of Americans for Peace Now, the Israeli Peace Now began to intensify its activities in the field, by monitoring settlement developments, organizing conferences in areas populated by immigrants and organizing public debates. Peace Now had developed a method of participating and campaigning for election in Knesset. Soon, in the 1992 general elections, the parties most closely associated with the peace movement such as Ratz, Mapam and Shinui decided to unite and form a

parliamentary block. This coalition was called Meretz (Energy)⁹: "Peace Now's first reaction to this political cooperation was to propose the inclusion of two of its leaders on Meretz's list of candidates for seats in the Knesset, arguing that Meretz would not be complete without such an addition"(Bar-On 1996:296). However, this appeal was unsuccessful: "possibly due in part to the changes in the political culture, which was coming to look with disfavour on deal making in the formation of election lists. Primary elections by the party membership were becoming the rule rather than the exception, leaving no room for individuals associated with Peace Now, which were not previously active in one of the established parties" (Bar-On 1996:296). Soon, a consensus was reached that Peace Now would not affiliate itself with any political party, but rather would remain as an extra parliamentary entity to promote peace. Most of Peace Now's activists ultimately joined Meretz and actively campaigned for the party. On the other hand: "Peace Now was not really a membership organization, and there were no elected local or national bodies. Decisions evolved on the basis of constant attempts to create a consensus for peace" (Kaminer 1996:115).

Peace Now continued its extra-parliamentary activities and approached other society groups to vote and participate actively in the elections in 1992. The first step they took was to persuade the Israeli Arabs to vote, including some Arabic fundamentalists. The second effort was to urge the Russian immigrants and call on them to support the cause of peace. The new elected Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was determined to go on with the peace process and to cut dramatically the state budget on settlement constructions. He, therefore accepted the concept of territorial compromise in return for peace which had been a key concept of the Peace Now agenda since its foundation. The US government and president Bush senior were also determined to support strongly the peace process politically and financially. For the peace movement these events appeared to present the beginning of a new period in Israel's foreign and domestic policy, the "New Middle East" period. Nevertheless: "the presence of the well-known peace activists in the new government, including Shulamit Aloni, Yair Tzaban and Amnon Rubinstein as experienced Peace Now leaders, caused some within the peace movement to feel that extra-parliamentary activities had lost their role in the pursuit of peace" (Bar-On 1996:299). In 1990s Peace Now

⁹In December 2003, Meretz was disbanded in order to merge with Yossi Beilin's SHAHAR movement and Roman Brinman's "The Democratic Choice" party. The new party will be called Yachad, which literally means "together", but is also an abbreviation of "Democrat Social Israel" in Hebrew. Retrieved from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meretz> on 08.07.2004

expanded its circle in America and Western Europe. The development of Americans for Peace Now during 1990s was one indication of changes in the political landscape of US Jewry: "The American movement, which was run by a single staff person up to 1989 had 15 staff and board members by the middle of 1990" (Kaminer 1996:161).

Peace Now has gained significant support in certain public echelons in Israel, mainly among Ashkenazi¹⁰ middle-class people, academics and kibbutzim, thus received great media support. This 'love affair' of Peace Now with the media lasted until the beginning of the second Intifadah 2000. With the increase of Palestinian terrorism, the majority of the population ignored Peace Now and the peace camp in Israel, including the media. However: "although the Declaration of Principles with the Palestinians signed in 1993 may be attributed, at least in part, to Peace Now's success in altering the national perception of Palestinians, in the late 1970s-early 1980s its political efficacy was dismayingly low" (Hermann 1996:161).

At the same time as the secret Oslo process was continuing, in the northern border between Israel and Lebanon, there were a number of attacks initiated by Hezbollah¹¹ toward Israeli territory, when the IDF responded with artillery and aerial bombing of target north of the 'security belt': "The entire Meretz ministers in the cabinet voted in favor of the operation" (Bar-On 1996:307). This made Peace Now activists face difficulty in reaching a consensus on this situation. An ambivalent statement was adopted (cf. Ibid). "Paradoxical as it may appear in the light of their basic ideological antagonism, Peace Now also acknowledged the supreme importance of core Zionist values, but its ideological frame of reference, there were not put above such universal values as democracy, human rights, and justice. This value hierarchy contradicted the prevailing preference of national values over universal ones, thereby raising the public's suspicion regarding the movement's basic loyalties for Peace Now" (Hermann 1996:160).

On the other hand, there was a permanent consultation going on between Peace Now leaders and Meretz members of Knesset about different issues, and sometimes these consultations resulted in very heated debates. Yet, the Peace Now and Meretz continue its cooperation's.

¹⁰ The term Sephardim is used in Israel to define Jews of Asian or North African descent, whereas Ashkenazi is the term used to define Jews of European or American origin. (Herman 1996)

¹¹ Hezbollah (Arabic, meaning Party of God) is a political and military organization in Lebanon founded in 1982 to fight Israel in southern Lebanon. See (Friedman 1989:225).

Towards the end of the 1980s Peace Now faced one of the classic dilemmas of any protest movement: how to respond during the period when electoral politics take center stage: "Despite the temptation to cash in on the prestige of Peace Now and its leadership, the movement decided to stay out of parliamentary politics" (cf. Kaminer 1996:24-25). Peace activists asked themselves to what extent single-issue organizations would be able to respond to the diverse agendas of the Israeli electorate: "Eventually the appeal was minimalist; namely, to refrain from voting Likud"(Kaufman 1988:67). Yet, Peace Now succeeded in channelling people's concerns through the Meretz party, which in turn influenced decision-making bodies in Knesset (Israeli Parliament).

In the 1992 Knesset election, Meretz won 12 seats, making it the third largest party. It joined the coalition with Yitzhak Rabin Labor's party, which succeeded to further the peace process and sign the Oslo Accord. Yossi Sarid led Meretz during the 1998 Knesset Elections when it obtained nine seats and joined the opposition. In the 15th (1999 -2001) Knesset election's Meretz won ten seats, while the results of the 2003 election to the Knesset shows that Meretz's representation decreased to 6 mandates. The support for Meretz had dropped markedly after the Second Uprising in 2000. After three successive elections in which Meretz received more than a quarter of a million votes, the party got only 164,000 votes in the January 2003 elections, losing four of its 10 Knesset seats (Carmel 2004:1) dropping from 54 Knesset members in 1992 to 24 in 2003, following the second Intifadah. Four out of six Meretz members who hold Knesset seats are also cofounders of "Peace Now" movement: Oron Haim, Vilan Avshalom, Ran Cohen, Gal-On Zahava.¹² Meretz sees itself as the political representative of the Israeli Peace Movement. Traditionally the 'peace lobby' in the Knesset is composed of the Israeli Labor party and Meretz. Meretz currently does not have a written ideological platform but it does emphasize the following principles: Peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, a solution of two states for the two nations within the pre-1967 borders, dismantling most of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and respect of Human rights.

Despite murderous Palestinian terrorist attacks that increased after the second Intifadah in 2000, Meretz continue warning people that the peace process could be brought on table again. This 'idealistic' approach of Meretz party look as if it irritated many of the desperate

¹²The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, retrieved from <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Modern%20History/Historic%20Events/Candidates%20for%20the%2016th%20Knesset>, on 14.12.2004

voters who saw in Palestinians only terrorists, instead of a serious counterpart for furthering negotiations. The voters instead turned to the rightist parties such as Likud, that advocated hard-core solutions.

3.3.4. Peace Now Disorientation 1996-2004

One of the reasons for the failure of the Oslo process was the exclusion of both Israeli and Palestinian civil society from the negotiation table. Although the peace process was in fact preceded by a number of initiatives by Palestinian and Israeli NGOs, academics, labor unions, youth groups and peace groups throughout the 1980s, not enough effort were made to 'popularize' the process and to bring it back to the people concerned (cf. Schulz 2004). Furthermore, the Oslo process was an understanding between the 1993 Labor government in Israel and PLO. However, after the Labor defeat in the 1996 elections, Likud party took power. It proved difficult for the Oslo peace process to be transferred to the Likud government headed by Netanyahu, who did not show any interest in continuing the implementation of the Oslo process. The lack of trust between Likud and PLO brought the process to standstill.

A core pillar of Peace Now's approach to peace has been the need for mutual recognition between Israelis and Palestinian and their national narratives, (cf. Pappé 2001:6). Although Peace Now recognizes the two groups and their disparate views and claims, it is argued that this is not reflected in the group's activities: "In its activities the group fails to acknowledge the 1948 catastrophe of the Palestinian people, approaching the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as if it began in 1967. Moreover, this bias underscores Peace Now's unwillingness to confront history from the standpoint of the oppressed, which is a necessary component in every dialogic attempt to bring peace".¹³

Peace Now's desire for peace with the Palestinians derives more from a wish for two state solution and separation from Palestinians than from any concern to redress a historical injustice or to end state wrongdoings in occupied territories. Indeed: "members of Peace Now avoid including the Palestinians of Israel in any discussion of the Palestine question.

¹³ Quoted from; American Friends Service Committee, Faces of Hope, retrieved from: <http://www.afsc.org/israel-palestine/learn/resistance.pdf>, 20.04.2005

"To do so could open a debate on Israel as a Jewish state, a topic no one in Peace Now is willing to address" (Pappe 1997:38).

The standpoint of Peace Now is within the Zionist left camp. Its understanding of Israel is as a Jewish nation-state. Feige argues that the 'pragmatic pacifism' of Peace Now means that national and personal security, rather than peace, is presented as unconditional values. Members of the movement take pride in their rethinking of the meaning of security, in a way that incorporates the concept of peace (1998:92).

With the failure of the Clinton-led Camp David II summit in 2000 and the emergence of a second Intifadah in 2000, Peace Now emerged as disorientated. It faced its deepest crisis since the beginning of its activities. This crisis was about lack of strategy on influencing people to support the Geneva Initiative, confronting the Palestinian terrorism and enhancing earlier started dialogue with moderate Palestinians. These terrorist attacks lead Peace Now and other leftists to advocate a unilateral withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories with or without a peace treaty.

In 2001, the Taba negotiations failed too. In the meantime Palestinian hardliners continued suicide bombings against Israeli soldiers and civilians, while Israeli forces targeted killings toward spiritual Palestinian leaders. The suicide bombings were detrimental for Peace Now's search for a dialogue with Palestinians.

Peace Now, maybe for the first time in its history was in a tough position. The movement faced a tough choice between supporting a failing peace process or siding with government policies? In 2002 Israel forcefully reoccupied nearly all-Palestinian areas evacuated as part of the Oslo process, and began construction of the security wall.

While Peace Now continues to distrust Sharon Government, and for years criticized his settlement policies, on the other hand an overwhelm majority of Peace Now's members support Sharon disengagement plan from Gaza.

The main objective of Peace Now is that secure peace can best be achieved through Israeli withdrawal to safe borders.¹⁴

Peace Now is still a leading force that can gather people to join in demonstrations, thereby pressuring the government to rethinking any decision that will harm the peace process. Peace Now, is much weaker after 2000 because as a movement, it was unable to provide an alternative solution on how to stop Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israelis. Peace Now

¹⁴ The term safe border is used by Peace Now to explain that the security can only be achieved with two state solutions that establishes the state of Palestine alongside Israel.

failed to bring about results, despite its best intention on mobilising people to pursue Israeli leaders on reconsidering new negotiations with Palestinians.

Peace Now's organizational structure today consists of an executive director and spokesperson, six office managers in main cities in Israel, a high number of volunteers, several hundred involved in projects and promotion, and thousands of supporters: "After 2000, Peace Now's committee consists of about 20 members, and members meet once a month. All the decisions are taken in consensus, the main goals are to promote the peace process and to stop settlement activity".¹⁵

Peace Now is dedicated to promoting a partnership with communities. The ongoing programmes of Peace Now are to reach out the former Soviet Union immigrants, and to enhance the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. Other major activities are settlement watch and the organization of students to voice public campaigns.

Until now, the Peace Now biggest internal weakness was its failure to reach out to the poor and disadvantaged segments of Israeli society.

However, at a time when everybody's eyes are looking at the future after disengagement from Gaza, this may lead to the same kind of stalemate that existed prior to Prime Minister Sharon taking the initiative with his evacuation plan. And the continuation of violence will not be far behind if the evacuation actually stop with Gaza. It is here when Peace Now should strongly support the disengagement process from the occupied territories in the West Bank as well.

It will be interesting to observe this development in the future because this may introduce changes to Peace Now identity dilemma.

So now I am turning to an analysis of the interviews I conducted in my fieldwork.

¹⁵ This was communicated to me by email from Mr. Raz, Mossi on April 17, 2005 who is a member in the Committee of Peace Now, and Former General Director of peace Now 1994-2000.

4. Patriotic anti-militarism of Peace Now

4.1. Actor's perspective

"It is very important that dreams don't die. At Rabin's time we had dreams, when he died our dreams died too."

(Informant 5)¹⁶

As I stressed at the beginning of this thesis, my research interest concerns how Peace Now is striving to be actively involved in peacemaking in Israel. The main objective of this thesis was to gain insight on the activities of Peace Now in light of the second uprising (Intifadah) 2000-2004 as the situation has become even more complex.

Previously in section 3, I analyzed the historical background of Peace Now with an emphasis in three distinctive periods of Peace Now's activism throughout its existence. In order to illustrate my arguments, and because my thesis is an attempt to understand the crisis of identity of Peace Now after the second Intifadah, I will in this chapter focus on the informants that I interviewed during my research trip to Israel.

I addressed mainly six questions in conversation with my informants. These questions, however, were not focused explicitly on the concepts of identity or security.¹⁷ Both concepts were however addressed in the conversations in terms of existential threat. The understanding of an existential threat indirectly relates to both identity and security. In this chapter I will stress identity and security in an actor perspective, represented by the stories of the Israelis that I interviewed.

As a broad range of authors have recently stressed, the concept of 'fear' is closely related to the role of identity in conflict. Insecurity and fear tend to be a determining factor in violent identity conflicts (quoted from Schultz 2004:88).

¹⁶ Quote is from Lea Appelbaum, a Meretz member and Peace Now activist in an interview in Tel Aviv on July 9, 2004.

¹⁷ My research focus was further specified after my initial trip. This is a known experience from field research. After I returned from the trip, I came up with the idea of focusing my analysis only on one actor Peace Now, instead of covering the variety of peace movements in Israel. Peace Now is specific movement with a unique agenda, and that is why I decided to stress further its peace activism.

Israelis experience fear as an essential part of their struggle for identity. They believe that their identity is under threat and that this is a generating element of the conflict. Bar-Tal confirms that: “there is no doubt that the sense of threat and fear is the formative experience of the Jewish people” (Bar-Tal & Eldar 2005:1)

I have asked almost all informants if they feel insecure at home in Israel or whether they believe their lives are threatened. Almost all of them confirmed such a feeling. For example, in the words of one informant: “All my life I felt an existential threat living in Israel and is not very happy feeling. I have four children and three of them live outside. I wonder if I would like them to come back now, especially during the terrorist attacks” (informant 8).

Another informant who was a Peace Now supporter and member of Meretz confirms the experience of existential threat and reflects upon this: “Yes, I have been always scared to live in Israel and threatened. Before I was reluctant to tell my children to leave Israel, now I have nothing against them leaving. On the other hand, people are connected with the land, and they would prefer to live here” (informant 5). This insecurity was intensified after the rise of the suicide bomb attacks on Israeli civilians after the second Intifadah in 2000.

Approximately all of informants confirmed that they feel insecure, and feared for their lives. Yet, there were two informants who claimed that they didn't have fear to live in Israel. One of them was an Irish Jew who immigrated to Israel after 1990s, he asserted:

“I feel safe in Tel Aviv, at least more than in London during the IRA (Irish Republican Army) attacks” (informant 1). The same informant compared two cities Tel Aviv and London, and yet the permanent risk from suicide bombs in Tel Aviv presented less fear than the IRA attacks in London when he felt more insecure.

In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both sides are portraying themselves as victims, thus both identities Israeli and Palestinian represent a troubled identity, which for both is very much linked with the issue of borders and the land.

A Palestinian informant shares a different opinion about insecurity. According to her, all Israelis blame only Palestinian terror as a threat to security. She worked for many years in peace education program of Israeli and Palestinian youth in Jerusalem and described the fear in the following way: “So if you asked even leftists Israelis what they did to change current situation? To them, changing things is to stop terror. But to Palestinians mean changing the basic way of life...” (informant 11).

Yet, through militarization, Israelis succeeded in securing their identity while the Palestinians identity remains more vulnerable. As Schulz (2004:90) stressed, in the dynamic interaction between identity, threat, and security, the security establishment has found it necessary to induce fear in order to preserve both the security apparatus in itself and the security aspects of Israeli identity.

One can ask then to what degree this fear is genuine or is perceived as such, that makes people uncomfortable, and to struggle for more security?

The majority of Israeli informants have felt insecure throughout their whole lifetime. The wars that Israel confronted since 1948, confirm that this is a genuine fear. "Peace means to most Israelis that the Arab states don't fight us and don't threaten us (...) many Israelis think that the Arabs want to kill us so we have to defend ourselves even if we have to pay for peace" (informant 13).

On the other hand, Bar-Tal & Eldar are arguing that; "studies have proven that most of the wars were not necessarily meant to avoid these threats" ((Bar-Tal & Eldar 2005:1).

There are also those who believe and claim that the threats are more a matter of manipulation in order to keep people anxious about their personal security; "Innumerable studies and evidence demonstrate the constant nurturing of the sense of fear in society. This is carried out through textbooks, cultural products, the mass media (...) the collective memory that has been transmitted to the public beginning in antiquity, and continuing through the period of exile and up to the Arab-Israel conflict, has been focused on constructing a siege mentality and a sense of victimization" (Bar-Tal & Eldar 2005:1). This is confirmed from one of my informants who work in Jewish-Palestinian school for peace education in Givat Haviva: "The Zionist leaders for years educated Israelis that their lives are in danger, thus they have to defend themselves and stick together against the others, mostly Arabs (...) they nourish the concept of fear and manipulate people in order to keep themselves in power (...) they believe this is our existential threat that comes from Arabs" (informant 14).

Existential concerns such as the survival of the state, recognition by Palestinians and the Arab states, and dignity remain basics aspects of Israeli identity. A major reason for conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is unrecognized identity symbolized over territory. "To Israeli Jewish identity, the land of Israel is not only a peace of territory, but also a

mythologized safe haven, a 'home' "(Schulz 2004:86). For the Palestinians on the other hand, land is important just the same as for Israelis.

"It is a duty for Muslims to struggle against occupation. It is our duty to defend the land for the sake of God. For Jews, the issue is 'Promised Land'. For us, it is not a question of something promised-it is our land" (Stern 2003:39). Realistically there are two people struggling for the same land, so how one can resolve this problem if identity is not taken seriously?

The problem of land comprises the problem of property and refugees, which are the crucial issues to be resolved: "The 'difficult' issues such as Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugees, Jewish settlement, borders and security, was to be signed no later than 13 September 2000 (...) exactly seven years after the historical signing of Oslo-Agreement (Schulz 2004:95). So far this did not happen and the collapse of the Oslo process was following in aftermath of the second uprising.

The issues of property and refugees also make Israelis very insecure at their homes, and irritate Palestinians who lived as refugees for more than five decades.

An informant who runs an NGO in Israel called Zochrot, which means Remembering, aims at increasing awareness of Jews for the land that earlier belonged to the Palestinians and who places the signs in the Israel's streets named in Hebrew with an Arabic names asserts;

"As a Jew, I never felt that Arabs threatened me. They don't threaten the Jews, they threaten the imperialistic Jewish settlers and don't want Palestinians to suffer. They have nothing against open-minded Jews who don't want to live in somebody's territory" (Informant 2).

Another voice that calls on Israeli responsibility for dialogue with the Palestinians, in spite of the permanent fear and threats from terrorism, is a PhD student and a Peace Now activist: "I do feel insecure. Nowadays-even children learn how to be careful in walking and sitting in public spaces and this gives you a sense of insecurity in your own country. On the other hand living and growing up in the state which occupied other territories, you feel responsibility as a political person to raise your voice" (informant 7).

As Schulz argues, both Israeli and Palestinian identities represent troubled identities (2004:89). During the Oslo process these identities were recognized, but the discourse of fear of each other was not eliminated. What happened in the Oslo Accords is that both

sides mutually recognized their 'legitimate political rights': "It is true that Palestinians (like the Egyptians and the Jordanians) did not recognize Israel as a Jewish state. But neither did Israel recognize Palestine as the state of the Palestinian people-nor does it do so now" (Bar-Tal & Eldar 2005:1).

But what was achieved during the Oslo process as Schulz argues was that both sides took their identity very seriously and the enemy images were deconstructed (2004:91). Only by mutual recognition of each other the parties would be able to sit and negotiate. But it proved not to be that easy because the perceptions about each other were already formed.

"The idiom that we are a small state surrounded by enemies-the idea of being surrounded - makes people being threatened. We have to admit that during the Oslo Accord it was a more relaxed atmosphere, a period we called 'The New Middle East'. That time there were some signs of progress, but Israelis continue to humiliate Palestinians and the second Intifadah was the backlash" (Informant 4).

The period after Oslo was a collapse of all that was achieved until then. The situation escalated and security was at stake. Israelis were confronted with weekly Palestinian terrorist attacks and lived an uncertain life. On the other hand, the continuation of settlement building and the confiscation of Palestinian land and demolition of houses triggered more Palestinian terrorist attacks and suicide bombs, thus convinced even the most optimistic Israelis to leave the peace camp. Those more dissatisfied, turned to the rightists in hope that they will bring about security. This caused a temporary disorientation of the peace camp in Israel.

One informant explains this disorientation as a cause of government elites politics: "Why the disintegration of the left camp happens? The most and biggest failure is the Camp David meeting to improve the situation. I believe many would agree with this. Israeli government tried to convince public opinion that it was Palestinians who did not wanted to fulfill duties of Camp David, but Barak made everything possible to not implement that agreement (informant 12).

That there was not a Palestinian leader to talk with was a government reflection that captivated the minds of most Israelis. Peace Now also embraced the idea that there is no PLO leader with whom one can negotiate. But Peace Now contacted Palestinian

community leaders and activists in order to seek for dialogue. The Palestinian authorities on the other hand, were themselves not very keen on seeking dialogue with the leftist peace camp in Israel because the power was in the hands of the rightists. Peace Now was perceived as an organization composed of former soldiers who served in the occupied territories, and then later went out to protest: "During the second Intifadah, target of Israelis were Palestinian authorities. This is how they create enemies and formed a public opinion (...) the peace block in Israel became divided after the second Intifadah (informant 9). Peace camp itself and in particular Meretz party which is mainly supported by Peace Now, rushed to blame Arafat for supporting terrorism instead of taking the chance at Camp David negotiations.

"After failure of Camp David talks, it was really tough for peace block to go ahead with any new strategy. Second Intifadah found us somehow unprepared and we got lost, it took a while for us to take a stand again and improve our position in society... the whole opinion thought we the peace camp, disappeared and do not exists anymore (...) slowly and painfully it regained some of the ground lost when Ehud Barak so thoroughly discredited the cause of peace. It took a while to prove that "the left is not dead" (informant 13).

The demise of the Oslo Accords significantly affected Peace Now, since it has created an environment in which the inclusiveness of Peace Now was more difficult. As such, the openness of the Peace Now identity, that ensured that many people were brought together in this particular movement, seems to cause the problem for the movement. The identity of Peace Now is characterized by openness, consensus, and dialogue. It is not a rigid identity such as Gush Emunim. This flexibility in Peace Now's identity does not seem to correspond well with the 'hardening' of the conflict during the second Intifadah.

Another argument that trembled Peace Now and the peace block in general in the early 2000 after the Oslo process was that, the majority of people who voted for the rightist Likud, were people who were not reached by Peace Now and Labour members. Peace Now failed to assure and promise more social justice to the supporters from the periphery such as immigrants, Sephardim Jews and those more vulnerable.

According to many informants, the media also played a role during the second Intifadah, by ignoring the peace camp and its activities. Palestinians terrorism unified Israel against an 'enemy', the Palestinians, thus just very few in the radical peace camp had the courage to

challenge the reasons why terrorism increased. In this regard, one informant addresses increased nationalist sentiments: “the media in Israel embraced patriotic syndrome and national unification similar to that of 9/11 in the USA” (informants 14).

Another informant underlined the importance of the media in the decline of the peace camp; “They, Peace Now, gave up after the second Intifadah partially because the press ignored them and all peace block. They said the left is confused, which actually happen to be like that” (informant 9).

The Oslo period from 1993 until 1999 was remembered among Israeli informants to be the best period since the establishment of the state in 1948. It was the period that brought economic prosperity, more security, a chance for better recognition from the outside world, improvement of Israel’s diplomatic relations with other states: “The Oslo period was definitely the best period that Israelis ever had since 1948. Actually it was a fantastic period. However the change came with the second Intifadah when every week we dealt with two terrorist attacks” (informant 8).

But a Palestinian informant does not share the same view, she claims: “Before the Oslo Agreement was signed, we Palestinians could go to Tel Aviv. But after that it was like: “you wanted an agreement, now stay inside West Bank and Gaza”, while on the other hand Israel continued to control territory. So basically the Israelis were winner and we were losers” (informant 12).

One can ask then, how these gaps in perception of Oslo Accord or peace plan can be improved in future attempts at dialogue?

”On the Israeli side one can say that the principal demands of the Israeli peace movements on the government belong to the field of preventive violence. When we call the government to halt the expropriation of land, the destruction of houses, the building of settlements and exhort it to end the occupation etc” (Informant 9).

In some respects, the whole field of conflict resolution and preventive violence is about finding alternatives to violence. Help from neutral third parties who can build a bridge between civil society and elites, is almost always required to bring intractable conflict to a peaceful end. The peace movements in Israel and Peace Now in particular, was successful at mobilizing people and influencing the government. But because disoriented after the

Oslo failure, Peace Now needs to continue to search for a common ground on conflict resolution.

4.2. Civic-Military identity of Peace Now

Since its establishment in 1978, Peace Now has held on to its combination of loyalty to the IDF while also stressing the need for dialogue with Palestinians. But, in the conflict discourse, both the understanding of the role of IDF and the need for dialogue with Palestinians have become more disputed. I will now explain the basis of this argument. Of particular concern are the changes that I have observed in Peace Now, with an emphasis on the period of the second uprising. The first phase of Peace Now activism was characterized by successfully organized mass demonstrations. The main argument of Peace Now during the 1980s was that peace was not to be achieved unless some kind of shared agreement could be found with the Palestinians. Thus, the conflict was perceived as a shared responsibility. Peace could only be established when both parties contributed.

During the Oslo period 1993-1999, the conflict was reduced, and a cease-fire was in place. But since late September 2000, Palestinians and Israelis have found themselves engulfed in a daily spiral of violence (Schulz 2004:85).

The demise of the Oslo Accord has created a different understanding of the role of use of force in the interaction with Palestinians. The exchange with Palestinians now takes place primarily through military means. The role of the IDF has been strengthened. This is due to the Israeli perception that the conflict has escalated because of the act of Palestinian terrorists. The potentiality of dialogue is judged as less viable.

My informants also note the increasing of militarisation of the conflict. Of particular importance is that the militarisation is linked to the development of the peace camp in Israel: " Terrorism entered the life's of Israelis and this was an enormous impact to turn to the right. It was due to terrorism that people wanted more radical actions from the government, since they thought that the rightists were more prepared to take actions" (informant 8).

"In contradiction to other peace movements in the western world, Peace Now has never defined itself in terms of pacifist values. The leaders of Peace Now have explicitly demanded that supporters be willing to fight for their country, regardless of its moral

justification”(Feige 1998:92). This distinctiveness of Peace Now in terms of preferring to solve conflicts by non-violent means, yet not negating war as a means to peace, created a slippery boundary of identity between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’.

The army and the military experience played an essential role on Peace Now actions and political thought. The establishment of the movement was based on a military culture. Tamar Hermann defined Peace Now’s ideology as “pragmatic pacifism,” and noted the movement’s reluctance to condemn military actions outright (cf.Fiege1998:8). What should be clarified here is that the ‘self’ identity represents an Israeli identity, a Jewish identity, while ‘other’ identity represents the Palestinian identity, which in this case is an oppressed identity. Peace Now permanently searched for a ‘fluid’, ‘alternative’ and ‘hybrid’ identity, aiming to get more space to act and include the majority of population in order to bring social and political changes in society.

Peace Now is challenging the inclusive-exclusive identity by showing a commitment to understand and compromise with the ‘other’ identity, but is also hesitating to entirely support the ‘other’. One of the informants, a long time pacifist described himself how willing he was to join the army before he realized what actually the army is doing in occupied territories: “In the entire Israel you would not find more then 20 pacifists, so this is an indication how people believe in the army” (informant 13).

What makes Peace Now a unique movement, is its combination of protest and compliance: “Critical compliance,” meaning protesting yet actively participating in military action, is seen as giving a humane image to institutions which are inherently power-oriented, thus legitimating their existence”(Feige 1998:89).

Feige argues that while the state receives moral legitimation to claim its citizens for recruitment and sacrifice, the arrangement also sets boundaries for its power vis-à-vis civil society. The state has constantly to generate the sense of moral rightness in the use of power, especially across national borders (1998:4). The state of Israel has also constantly generated fear. Fear and security are two main factors that determine identity in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

When fear produced such an uncertainty and risk for the situation between conflicting sides to deteriorate, Peace Now’s best approach was to find a balance between conflicting sides, trying to negotiate with the moderate camp of the ‘other’ side, and simultaneously being active in defending its position as a strong ‘self’ identity.

Thus Peace Now attempted to build a bridge, but remained firmly at home. However, more radical viewpoints gained support: “Peace movements after the second Intifadah, sort of failed, within the Peace Now camp, new youth groups emerged, which turned to be more radical than Peace Now. Peace Now are basically shouting and crying which is an idiom in Israel, this means protesting and fighting in the West Bank” (informant 4).

Those peace activists, who decided to refuse to serve in the occupied territories, developed a more lucid identity and wanted therefore to distance themselves from Peace Now’s ambivalent stance. These peace activists did not face a moral dilemma to serve or not to serve in the army, nor did they consider that act shameful.

Peace Now continue to stand in between the Zionist aims focused on the establishment of a Jewish national homeland, and beliefs that in a land where such objectives are followed, there are other people who deserve to live in peace and freedom.

Peace Now remains a movement of Israeli citizens who view peace, compromise and reconciliation with the Palestinian people and the Arab states as the only guarantee for the future, the security, and the character of the state of Israel.

Peace Now can still attract thousands of sympathizers. But the problem is increasingly the difficulty of linking grassroots mobilization to macro politics: “Peace Now is still a mainstream movement and is able to invite 100,000 people to demonstrate and that’s it. The problem is how to canalise this energy of people, of those who oppose government policies towards Palestinians. Peace Now and other peace block it seems have no clear strategy as to what to do after demonstration?” (informant 6).

By focusing on “land for peace” compromise with the Palestinians, Peace Now overlooked the economic and social conditions faced by the majority of the Israeli population, particularly the Sephardim Jews and immigrants. Peace Now also failed to narrow the gap between micro and macro level, due to the second Intifadah when Peace Now had made it clear that their commitment to peace is entirely subordinate to their concern for the safeguarding of Israel. There is no direct link between the ability of Peace Now to attract sympathizers in micro level and its ability to influence political decision-making on the macro level due to security, which remain a major task to be resolved. Peace Now’s supporters, as everybody else in Israel are not capable of seeing anything other than through the prism of security. Security is linked in all branches of life.

5. Conclusion

A better understanding of the role of civil society, social movements and in particular peace workers may be useful in conflict transformation in various ways. Peace and conflict resolution researchers have begun to include civil society actors in their analysis and to recognize the role of such actors.

In order to understand how social movements and peace workers try to make changes, I have examined the role of peace movements in Israel with a particular emphasis on Peace Now, in mobilizing civil society and supporting peace processes. My research interest was transformed into the following research questions: How does Peace Now distinguish itself from other peace movements and which values are key to its collective identity? In addition, my analytical concern was how identity helped explaining the disintegration of Peace Now over the last five years?

Due to the lack of security and increase of powerful events of suicidal Palestinian terror since the beginning of the second Intifadah, an Israeli identity was threatened. Peace Now was challenged with the lack of options left in search for dialogue with the moderate Palestinians. This created ground for Peace Now and Israeli peace camp to disintegrate temporarily. Another reason for this disintegration, at least partially, was the effects of the Israeli government propaganda that Arafat was the one to be blamed for the failure of David Camp talks. Peace Now therefore, felt (again as during the Lebanon war) ambiguous what steps to take further. It condemned Palestinian authorities for terror, thus ideologically, morally and conscientiously, Peace Now supported the Israeli government's militaristic actions against Palestinian terrorists and spiritual leaders in occupied territories. On the other hand, Peace Now permanently blamed Israeli government for the continuation of settlement building.

What distinguishes Peace Now from other peace movements in Israel is exactly this ambivalent attitude. This is the core of the Peace Now identity dilemma. Simultaneous support and criticism of both parties to their conflict makes it difficult to express a coherent message of peace at all times. For Peace Now, crossing the line between 'us' and 'them' is dangerous, as it represents a threat of being transformed from 'self' into an 'other'. Therefore, Peace Now continued to keep a 'fluid' identity jeopardizing its position

as a mainstream movement by losing supporters who were keener to change their 'self' identity into 'otherness' and take sides with an oppressed group.

Peace Now's determination to be actively involved in peacemaking in Israel in different phases was crucial. In its contribution at bringing peace to Israelis and Palestinians, at the beginning of its activism, Peace Now was hesitating about what direction and with what means to pursue peace. After the first mass demonstration in 1978, Peace Now realized that it would gain more support if it continued with extra-parliamentary activism. But the movement also maintained strong relations with the Israeli parliament through the political party Meretz.

For almost two decades Peace Now achieved considerable success in mobilizing people and pursuing different governments to accept peace accords and compromise the territory with the Arab states. Therefore, the main objective of this thesis was to understand the behavior of Peace Now in light of the second uprising (Intifadah) 2000-2004 as the situation has become ever more complex, thus I tried then to examine what went wrong during this period.

In order to examine this, I have built my analysis on the role of security and identity in peace work and how difficult it is for peace actors to keep identity 'unchanged' in an attempt to build bridges between divided communities.

In order to better understand what is imperative for these actors and why it is important to bring about changes in society, I have looked at how peace workers relate to small-scale peace work and aim to contribute toward a more just and peaceful society on a large scale.

In this thesis I tried to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the problem of identities and how they relate to the security within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In particular I was concerned with the dynamics of identity formation within the actor Peace Now and its consequences for its peace work.

In order to better understand the role of civil society and peace work in Israel, in chapter 3 it was crucial to provide an overview of the historical background of Israel, and the conflict with Palestinians. Chapter 3 then continued with an overview of the emergence of peace movements in Israel. I have given an overall background of peace movement in Israel. I did not include the whole scope of movements since some of them dissolved into other

movements, while, other movements due to political developments simply broke up. Yet, it was necessary to analyze the reasons that caused the formation of Peace Now and how this movement succeeded to influence decision-making, and yet was maintained as a mainstream movement in Israel even today. It is essential to mention that reservist soldiers who were seeking for more responsibilities from the government after the Yom Kipur war in 1973 formed Peace Now. Peace Now's ability to mobilize people on the streets gave them more credibility and power to search for mechanisms of challenging and controlling government's wrong doings. They succeeded in persuading government to sign a peace treaty and campaigned for the Left forces to take power, and support the Oslo process and its implementation. Subsequently, due to the fact that large groups of extremists from both sides were not taken into consideration, the demise of the Oslo process happened in 2000, and this marked the beginning of the Peace Now crisis of identity.

In Chapter 4 I analyzed informant's stories from the peace camp and Peace Now. They described that after the collapse of the Oslo Accords in September 2000, support for Peace Now and the radical left in Israel dropped as it became associated with conciliation and defeatism.

The Israeli peace camp was also highly criticized for lacking realism given the absence of a matching movement on the Palestinian side of the conflict. It was also accused of being forgiving toward Palestinian terrorism and not being able to stand up for the rights of the Israelis and the vital interests of Israel.

From the analysis in this thesis, I will like to conclude with some comments on Peace Now's future work.

Firstly, Peace Now can be actively involved in the future in terms of not only watching the settlement building and outposts, but also mobilizing all people, including the periphery to vote for the left. Probably it is time for Peace Now to remake its strategy and decide what is next. There are not many options, but peace through dialogue is an option. How can peace be achieved when the power relations between two sides are evidently different? Israel as the major force, military and institutionally, should make the first step.

Secondly, a peace movement usually seeks to guarantee peace by assuring what they see as basic human rights for all people including the right of all people to have access to air,

water, food and shelter. A large cadre of activists seeks social justice in the form of equal protection under the law and equal opportunity under the law for groups that have previously been disenfranchised. Peace Now, could and should continue to make pressure on Israeli government as it did in the past in seeking paths to peace, but also to work closely with those Palestinians who promote peace instead of terrorism.

I will now end this thesis with the Peace Now slogan, which invites people to support government disengagement plan from Gaza:

“Don't stay behind. Together we'll get out of the mess.”

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Appendix 1

Acronyms

IDF- Israeli Defense Forces

NGO-Non-Governmental Organizations

JNA-Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija

KLA-Kosovo Liberation Army

LTTE-Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

UNITA-União Nacional pela Independência Total de Angola

HIK-Heidelberg Institute on International Conflict Research

CRM-Citizens Rights Movement

PLO-Palestinian Liberation Organization

DOP-Declaration Of Principles

PM-Prime Minister

IPCRI-Israeli-Palestinian Center for Research and Information

CAHD-Committee Against House Demolitions

UNSC-United Nations Security Council

UNGA-United Nations General Assembly

NRP-National religious Party

IISH-International Institute of Social History

IRA-Irish Republican Army

APN- Americans for Peace Now

ICJ-International Court of Justice

Appendix 2

The map of Israel ¹⁸



¹⁸ Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, see website; http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east 15.04.2005