

Chapter Three

The Present II: The neo-monolithic construction in the collective identity

As I mentioned in the introduction, the present has two parts: The disintegration of the monolithic construction and the backlash in the form of a neo-monolithic construction. The difference between the earlier monolithic phase and the current backlash, that in the latter, the two processes of disintegration and neo-monolithic forces work simultaneously, thereby creating a whirlwind which makes orientation extremely difficult. In the previous chapter I showed how the disintegration of the monolithic construction in the Israeli-Jewish identity creates fear and havoc of the unknown, together with anger at the loss of the ostensibly stable construction that was projected at whoever was identified as the causing this process (Shavit, 1997). Another difference between the monolithic and neo-monolithic construction, that the latter was manipulated by political leadership and thereby becomes a top-down rather than bottom up process. The top-down process may have been part of the original monolithic construction as well, but the difference is that then it was based on a bottom-up societal need of Israeli-Jews to create a distinct collective. Currently, the politicians use events that cause fear in the society (as the outburst of the second Intifada in October 2000 or the attack on the World Trade Center in September 2001) to "unite their people around the war against terror," thereby also trying to intervene in the continuing disintegration process. But the disintegration of the original monolithic construction could not be stopped, because the cracks were already too deep. What could be, however, manipulated within the Israeli-Jewish society, bottom-up, was the arousal of old unresolved traumatic events (the Holocaust) that re-activated the threatening alien "Other" in relation to the present, as it was remembered from the past.

Usually, in order to manage the difficulties of the disintegration of the monolithic construction, a relative, external stability is necessary. The outburst of new violence and terror added to the havoc and chaos of the disintegration process. This disrupted what has already been managed earlier and diminished the ability to develop more complex and soft perspectives of oneself and the 'Other'. At this point, polarized political positions developed around the value of the disintegration process itself. Usually political conservative groups view the disintegration of the monolithic construction as a negative process ("everything is falling apart, let's unite!"). Liberal intellectuals and some social scientists view the same process positively ("finally we know what has been covered up all along"). But the polarized political discourse diminished the important potential outcome of the disintegration process: The possibility of developing a more complex and soft perspective of oneself and the 'Other'. The neo-monolithic backlash suggests,

among others, that disintegration that was already perceived by some parts of the society as functional and progressive in relation to the monolithic construction. These were now perceived again as regressive and dysfunctional. For example, part of the Israeli-Jewish political center and left-wing that supported the Oslo peace process, was "disappointed" by the outbreak of the Al Aqsa Intifada in October 2000 and the behavior of the Palestinians, thereby supporting Sharon's rise to power. This was the clearest representation of the neo-monolithic backlash in Israel.

The Al-Aqsa Intifada reinforced the traditional Israeli-Jewish political Right, who maintained earlier that the disintegration of the monolithic construction of identity was regressive and dangerous. They have maintained throughout the Oslo years (1993-2000) that conditions have not been safe enough to relinquish the monolithic Zionist "self", as the external threat have not yet been removed. Therefore, it was too early to expect that Israeli-Jews, as a collective, could cope with the disintegration of their monolithic construction, particularly at such a critical stage of external threats (of the Palestinians and the Arabs in general) as well as the internal (economic dependence and absorption of Russian emigrants). The terror attacks of the 9-11-01, created a similar trend in the USA, and the combination of these two events created a kind of a sacred alliance between the neo-cons in both countries, reinforcing the neo-monolithic backlash. The polemic response of the traditional political left, refuting any reaction to the terror attacks, suppressed the need for a more complex understanding of the current situation and a more sophisticated response to it (Zizek, 2003).

The debate concerning the timing of the disintegration and its definition as dangerous regression or welcome progression, constituted one of the debates that divided Israeli-Jewish society also prior to October 2000. Except that the debate (apart from certain extreme elements in the religious-nationalist camp) did not question the need for a maturing process of the collective identity or the need for a transition from the monolithic to the multicultural collective identity construction. The debate focused then more on the question of timing: Can we permit ourselves to enter the next stage at this moment, the stage of the disintegration of the monolithic construction, or not? Arguments such as "After all we haven't yet reached a real peace process with our Arab neighbors", or "We are still threatened at home and abroad," were raised. But, as suggested earlier, the events of 2000-1 and thereafter, made the question of timing seem irrelevant. Now it was "clear" that the timing was least ripe for any change.

I would like to emphasize, that even prior to these violent events and the neo-monolithic backlash, when the dispute was still more around the issue of timing, the polarity itself did not introduce a paradigm change: the expected 'softness', complexity or dialogue into the political discourse. What happened was, that parallel to the monolithic, Zionist narrative, an alternative,

Post Zionist narrative developed, one that was not less monolithic in its discourse. The post-Zionist stand attempted to deal with basic issues in the Zionist narrative (the question of the Palestinian refugees in '48, the question of the Ashkenazi hegemony, etc.), but did so in a polemic way. This debate, though it helped accelerating the process of the disintegration of the Zionist monolithic construction, did not bring about a paradigm change concerning the "black and white" discourse itself. That is, the Post Zionist alternative was presented in a polemic tone and was unable to develop a dialogue of a more complex representation. Therefore, the two monologues that did not meet did not bring about a paradigmatic change of the discourse (Bar-On, 1998). In the expected paradigmatic change, parallel voices will enter into a dialogue, and will be evaluated positively, including the continuation of the traditional, Zionist voice. One could claim that the strength of the hegemonic Zionist monolithic construction required the creation of a 'demolishing', polemic voice, otherwise the hegemony of the monolithic Zionist would never have been seriously challenged. But, the price of this development should not be undermined: A debate developed between the extremes in a pendulum-like movement that, paradoxically, reinforced the polemic, discourse and thereby helped the revival of the neo-monolithic backlash, when the external events made that feasible.

Social psychology usually characterizes people who are able to contain conflicts, as people who can cope better with ambiguity, those who can contain the contradictions and conflicts among values without trying to deny or dismiss them (Tetlock, 1987). According to Moscovici (1976), one may interpret the monolithic construction of the collective "self" as a process in which one part of society (the 'hegemonic') represents the whole, speaking in its name, while ignoring and suppressing other, different voices. According to this concept, it is only when the monolithic construction of the "self" disintegrates, that it becomes clear that the hegemonic part suppressed other parts of the collective "self", while relating to it as the "Otherness of the Other" (Levinas, 1990). Only then, within the framework of the less monolithic "self", other voices in the society get an independent expression of their own, and the question of a different hegemony or a more pluralistic hegemony can be addressed. The ability to contain the 'Other' Zionist alternative was not usually seen as an essential part of the Post Zionist concept. Part of the problem perhaps stemmed from the fact that the Post Zionist voice was lead by people who, originally, came from the Ashkenazi elite within the Israeli-Jewish society. In that sense, they unwittingly also feared the disintegration of the monolithic construction and its resulting multiculturalism no less than their traditional Zionist colleagues.

Thus it could happen, for instance, that as a political result of the disintegration of the monolithic construction in Israeli collective identity, the Ashkenazi hegemony could come to an

end: The hegemony that, among other things, was associated with the early Zionist monolithic constructions. A different hegemony may or may not develop instead. One could imagine hegemony of the Sephardic Afro-Asian groups, or, in contrast, a more pluralistic hegemony (less monolithic) that would contain those contradictions and opposites that exist in the collective Israeli “self”. For those on the political Israeli-Jewish Left who were part of the Ashkenazi hegemony, such a development was unwittingly interpreted as a “regression” from the “progress” of Universalism or Westernization that they believe in, which would enable the continuation of their hegemony. This shows, how multi-layered and paradoxical these process are, and how difficult it is to evaluate their social-psychological significance in one simple way.

Israeli political Leftists did not value the possibility that Sephardic Afro-Asian leadership might have better chances to contain the Arab “alien” and integrate into the Arab Middle East, more than the Ashkenazi Left in Israel (Shenhav, 2003). A Left that represented Western cultural norms and was perceived (both by themselves and by Arabs) as colonial and paternalistic. These representatives of the Israeli political Left did not take into account that the disintegration of the monolithic construction could adversely affect their political position as a result of changes in the social-cultural hegemony. When they supported the disintegration, they regarded it only as the breakdown of certain obsolete, political constructions of past events (Maoz & Bozgal, 1997). In contrast, despite the definition of the political Right as ostensibly “regressive” with regard to relinquishing the monolithic construction, some of the Right Wing politicians supported the rise of the Sephardic political power, thereby helping to advance the dismantling of the traditional Ashkenazi hegemony. Paradoxically, however, the neo-monolithic backlash enabled the traditional Ashkenazi hegemony even within the political right to regain power, as a unity against the enemy justified stability. Neo-cones are usually not interested in relinquishing political power to other groups.

Part of the complexity inherent in the processes of monolithic disintegration is the issue of the concept of 'privatization' or individualization as a way to bring about the deconstruction of the monolithic collective “self”. Those who favored the deconstruction of the monolithic Zionist ethos initially perceived the internalization of Western values in the developing Israeli individualism as an adequate answer to an overly strong collectivism that ruled in the Israeli-Jewish society during earlier period (Ram, 1993). According to this perception, monolithic disintegration was associated with the disintegration of the collective identity as such. In this sense, they viewed American individualism as a desirable goal that could be reached as a result of the disintegration of the collective identity altogether. Except that this approach did not last long, not even in America. It became clear that individualism expressed despair of the

collectivism that was perceived as “fake”, exaggerated and obsolete. Nevertheless, one cannot conceive a multicultural or multi-voiced society without a combined orientation of individualism, family, ethnic or even additional forms of collectivism (Oyserman, 1993). This was particularly true in a diversified society such as Israel, which has several ethnic groups, different religions and cultural traditions emanating from varying influences. Therefore, the worship of individualism could not be seen as a paradigm change either, because it contradicted monolithic collectivism in a simplistic frame of mind. A paradigm change will take place only with the manifestation of an Israeli-Jewish collective identity that will contain contradictions inherent in this society, without merely changing the direction of the projection by 180 degrees from collectivism to individualism or from Zionism to post-Zionism.

As I mentioned earlier, the fact that a paradigmatic change did not take place in the disintegration process, paved the way for the neo-monolithic constructions, when violence broke out, and the fear of the threatening alien 'Other' intermingled with the pain and fear related to the disintegration process itself, especially its chaotic nature. Still, the neo-monolithic backlash did not resolve the chaos it even made it worse, especially as the disintegration process of the previous monolithic construction did not stop. What I defined as the whirlwind between these two opposing dynamics made orientation quite impossible. On one hand this accounts for the public wish for strong leadership, that could provide at least an illusion of strength, security and continuity (like Sharon, in the Israeli example). On the other hand, even such a figure could not provide a political solution to the public, as security was challenged daily together with all the other internal economic and social tensions. The frustration has led to uni-lateral acts of despair like the Wall and Sharon's current disengagement plan in 2004. Still, these proposals suffered from a similar limitation: they did not resolve the phenomena of the whirlwind. Could such developments lead to some form of paradigmatic change? This is still to be seen. What we know in the meantime, that the neo-monolithic backlash did not resolve the problem it was constructed to solve: To create stability and relaxation. The neo-monolithic backlash actually became part of the problem rather than its solution.

The combination of the neo-monolithic backlash and the disintegration of the monolithic previous construction of the collective identity is a process that is not only taking place in Israel. I mentioned before that similar whirlwinds characterize also the U.S.A, especially after the terror attacks on the 9-11-01. Similar processes can be observed in countries that emerged from the monolithic stage of identity construction upon the fall of the Communist Bloc. We will discuss in the postscript how in some of these countries, the Communist monolithic construction was exchanged for an alternative, monolithic construction in the form of neo-nationalism and neo-

religious hegemony or some combination of the two. In other countries, the disintegration of the monolithic construction of Communist identity threatened the continuation of the common national existence and resulted in neo-monolithic backlashes or total disintegration of the society. In Bosnia, for instance, we have witnessed a bloody war in which the Serbs have attempted to impose the continuation of their hegemony onto the Muslim and Croatian minorities (Ron, 2002). There, the disintegration of the monolithic construction was so sharp with no prior conditions established to secure a dialogue between components of the society, except through the barrel of a gun or cannon. Another kind of problem characterizes certain Middle Eastern countries, like Saudi Arabia, who struggle between traditional, social elite, and extreme Islamist monolithic groups like Al Qieda.

Comparing the disintegration and neo-monolithic backlashes in the collective identity of other countries illustrates a painful, difficult process that can take the forms of destructive and catastrophic dimensions (at least in countries like Bosnia or Rwanda). One of the instinctive reactions of the monolithic, collective “self” threatened by the process of disintegration is the neo-monolithic backlash in the manifestation of a strong religious fundamentalism or extreme nationalism bordering fascism. We saw how these backlashes usually chose to form an alien, life-threatening “Other” that legitimized the renewal of the monolithic identity as well as the present political hegemony. Societies without previous experience in creating a complex identity construction, as well as those who became embroiled in violent reactions as the fundamentalist or nationalistic kind, have difficulty facilitating the gradual transition from the monolithic construction through disintegration to the stage of recognition, dialogue and construction of a more complex identity forms: These that contains contradictions that the collective “self” had hitherto been unable to contain.

This particular kind of difficulty exists in Israeli-Jewish society. It may account for the fact that successful disintegration took place only in regard to the monolithic construction of the Jewish 'Others' identified earlier (the Diaspora Jew and the ethnic Jew). The disintegration together with the renewed violence created the backlash, mainly in regard to the monolithic construction of the alien 'Other', especially when, through the previous peace agreements with Egypt, Jordan and the Oslo Accord, a possibility of "giving up the enemy" became real. The backlash also showed that this possibility was perhaps too much for people to endure at that time. This could also account for the fact, that while the disintegration of the monolithic construction of the Jewish 'Others' started, in the late sixties and early seventies the Israeli-Jewish society became entangled in messianic myths both among the political and religious Right, especially regarding the Palestinian 'Other'. One could summarize that the maturing

process of the Israeli-Jewish identity, following 2000 years in the Diaspora, in the economic, social reality at the end of the second thousand, is a far more complex and difficult process than the mixing of cement, plough and tank characterizing the first stages of the Zionist settlements. How can a meaningful dialogue be created between the various components of the Israeli-Jewish identity, how can it help develop a dialogue with the alien 'Other' and how can these be translated into meaningful social, political and economic settlements? This is the task that lies before us for the next fifty years at least, if not for many more generations to come that we will try to foresee in our fourth chapter.

I would like to present here two examples of the whirlwind (of the deconstruction of the monolithic pattern and the neo-monolithic backlash) in the Israeli scenery: First, another interview with an Israeli officer who participated in the 1987-92 Intifada will be analyzed. It will show, how Adi (pseudonym) had difficulties orienting himself, between the opposing dynamics that he was caught in. On one hand, Adi has a moral stand: He reflected on the danger of his experiences in the *Intifada* as a loss of humanity among Israeli officers and soldiers and its inherent damage to their capacity to fight. In the interview he tells four stories all of which concern this subject. At the same time, he hardly mentions the wounding of Arabs. In his view, they are not part of his problem. With regard to the alien “Other”, the monolithic construction in his identity, though shortly cracking, is reconstructed very soon. In this respect, he reflects a rather broad part of Israeli society: Even when the monolithic construction regarding internal “Others” started to crack and disintegrate (the “Diaspora” and the “ethnic” Jew), there is a renewed tendency to use neo-monolithic constructions toward the Palestinian “Other”, especially as in Adi's view, they are still perceived as a threat to physical or psychic independent existence of Israel as a Jewish State.

Second, I will tell about my work at PRIME (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East), which started under the Oslo premises and hopes, when we suddenly found ourselves caught in the middle of renewed violence that was storming as a whirlwind around us, not knowing if to continue or to stop our joint projects.

3.1 Adi: Between the monolithic and neo-monolithic Identity construction¹

Adi, 27, was an engineering student at Ben Gurion University in 1994. He did his army training in the prestigious Golani unit where he served as a soldier and an officer. He joined the army in 1986 and, after a year and a half, he did an officer's course. He returned to the same

¹ - Tally Verner and Sharon Amir interviewed Adi in 1994 (Bar-On, Yitzhaki-Verner and Amir, 1996).

company as Division Officer of company recruits and a team officer and was promoted to the rank of Company Commander of a course for unit commanders. He served for four years, mainly in Lebanon and the Occupied Territories (Gaza, Judah and Samaria). He has served in the reserve army in Gaza only once. After a brief opening in laconic and military language (without using the word “I”), Adi sums up his army service and one of his periods in Lebanon (distinguishing between Lebanon and the Territories):

“ In retrospect you could say, and this is something I only understood at the end of my regular service...when you do these things you don’t really appreciate the implications of what you are doing. It isn’t until someone in your company is wounded or killed that you understand you are playing with very dangerous stuff. You do things as if they were a game and you go out on ambush or out to open up a line – people get hurt in these things. This is something I only understood at the end of my regular service, and, after I was demobilized, I said – wow, people die in these things and we played...somehow, when you are engaged in something, maybe it’s an advantage and maybe it’s a disadvantage, but when you are engaged in something you are aware of the danger, but you cannot imagine the implications”.

When Adi begins to talk about the *Intifada*, his manner of speaking changes (“*What was it like? Cool, no big deal*” (laughing). He continues seriously: “*When you’re in Lebanon you know damn well what you’re doing, and why and how... I mean, there are different kinds of service in Lebanon. But in the Intifada*”:

“It’s terrible, terrible, terrible. There’s a lot of violence. Violence with stones and Molotov cocktails...a demonstration some place and you’re a small force as opposed to crowds and there’s not much you can do because you aren’t going to shoot people and you have to disperse a demonstration, and it gets physical when scores of women shake and scratch at you and you have to keep them away. It’s very dirty work, a lot of situations when you think – I wouldn’t get into this situation, I wouldn’t be in this place, and you do unpleasant things, like breaking up a demonstration, like...you try and catch stone-throwers. They throw a stone at us, a brick was thrown at one of the soldiers, it’s quite dangerous, so we start chasing the guy, I was already an officer then, an officer. So we caught the guy, near his parent’s home and all the women come out, they live in extended families, the mother, the sister and the aunt and the sister-in-law and they grab you. They come to me as the officer, grabbing and shaking at you. Now, on one hand you have a purpose and you want to arrest the guy and, on the other hand, they’re jostling around you so you push the mother. To them that’s an insult. It all gets out of hand and sometimes something small becomes a big incident. It’s no fun at all running after little

kids. They often know the area better than we do, all the alleyways and so on. So at some point you stop running after stone-throwers because it's a waste of time. You can't stop this phenomenon, and...I've lost my train of thought...it's no fun because those places smell, you have to go inside, inside the houses. It's hard work because there's a lot to do, reconnaissance during the day and arrests at night and it's winter and raining and there's a lot of work and, on the other hand, even though it's a mess you're trying to educate soldiers. After all, being an officer means educating younger soldiers, trying give them values, so you don't lose control. I don't believe in losing control but you teach them values in the Base and when we get into the street, it's different. There you meet the reality and you don't always behave the way you expect to".

In this extract, there are swift transitions from 'you' to 'we' between three levels of language – from military *Intifada* language to a description of specific incidents, to a more personal language. In contrast to the monolithic "self" so clearly defined in the previous extract related to Lebanon, here it is hard for Adi to define himself within the unpleasant situation, one, that from a military point of view, is less clear. What seems particularly hard for him is the blurred boundary between 'my body' and 'their body' (the mothers). This kind of description is confused and un-committed, personal, repeated in other interviews with soldiers who served during the *Intifada*. It seems that soldiers have developed a general codes around these situations, one that is comprehensible mainly to soldiers who were there, but for whom it is difficult to use a more personal language that includes a defined "self". Perhaps in the military confusion of the *Intifada*, and in the confusion of values that accompanied it, there was no time or possibility of examining whom this "self" was. Perhaps this was the stage when the monolithic construction of the "self" disintegrated.

Adi himself uses several specific descriptions that indicate violence in which he felt helpless – a war against women and children. He also describes his own internal conflicts. Among the descriptions there is a slightly more personal description of the "period when I was already an officer"...an attempt of sorts to begin a story, but Adi is not yet ready for this exposure and retreats to an ordinary, general description of "chasing small children".

Adi now tells the first³ of only four stories that appear in the entire interview:

"For instance, we were on reconnaissance in Nablus once, and I had a new sergeant, a rather disturbed character, he wasn't with me very long, but in this instance we were chasing

³The story has a number of characteristics that distinguish it from a description or an argument. The story has a chronological beginning, middle and end, it deals with a specific situation, including tension that rises and develops into a climax, expressing the more personal feelings of the narrator (Rosenthal, 1993).

someone, it was in the Kasba in Nablus, and he ran into a house. We went inside the house and this guy broke the door in with his head, sent it flying. The guys were fresh out of basic training and still very naive...they stood there, their mouths open, in shock. The sergeant was still going a bit wild inside the house, so I told him to “get out of there”... Really, these young guys arrive, high school kids, very naive, they don't know what it's about and when they come up against this sort of violent action, it's disturbing”.

Here, Adi takes a personal moral stand (“I told him to get out of there”). He is distressed by the negative behavior of the sergeant (distinguished from the others as a “rather disturbed character”) when he views the situation through the eyes of the naive young soldiers. What emerges here is that for Adi, the education and image of the young Israeli soldier should fit the monolithic Israeli identity construction as it existed before the *Intifada*. Adi is less interested in the fate of the Palestinians and the results of the violence perpetrated against them. This is expressed in such slogans as “it is unacceptable and one shouldn't behave like that”. Adi also tries to conform to military norms. This assumption is born out in the following extract: “*So we claim that our advantage, as opposed to other armies, lies in the human material, so this is where we can find it - in our attitudes to each other and how the commander talks to a soldier, how I talk to a citizen*”. Adi believes in the principle of our superiority and fears situations where this is threatened. Now Adi moves to tell the second story, one that describes an encounter with a settler from Kalkilya:

“For instance, we were on reconnaissance in Kalkilya, and settlers, ah, settlers pass through Kalkilya because it is close to the center and they go through with Israeli flags on their cars as provocation, and we had orders from one of the commanders in the area (Border guards) to stop the cars and tell them to remove the flags. So we stopped a car, in the middle of Kalkilya, and we asked him to remove the flag, so the guy goes wild – “You, an army officer, you're behaving like a Nazi, why are you getting at me instead of getting the Arabs”? And he started yelling and cursing and... so there's confrontation, you have to be polite, you aren't about to hit a citizen or something like that, so it was a difficult encounter”.

In contrast to the first story, Adi transfers from first person plural to “you” when his response is required in the light of the fierce verbal attack of the settler. Adi doesn't tell us his response, only what it ought to be. He doesn't stipulate, but it sounds as if he had a difficult internal response despite his restraint. “So there's a confrontation...an encounter”, apparently expresses his internal conflict with regard to the manner of response possible, the desired one. Further on, Adi describes his feeling during this encounter and returns to the use of first person.

Now he expresses the frustration, bitterness and anger that stemmed from the response of the settler:

“I felt bad, I felt like shit. There I am, breaking my back, doing everything one has to do, guarding him, and he, not even minimal help, when I expect him to cooperate with me, he doesn’t cooperate. The opposite. Curses me, says I’m betraying the country and things like that. Personally, I...that’s something I remember clearly, it’s an incident that really bothered me, I feel – why am I doing it? My parents are in Beer Sheva, my family is in Beer Sheva, I don’t live in any of those settlements, all I’m doing is guarding these people and that’s how they respond. So it’s a bad feeling”.

Adi was insulted by the settler’s accusation (the epithet ‘Nazi’ that he translated as ‘betrayal’). It seems that Adi is still seeking a middle point that doesn’t exist in the field, a monolithic middle point from which one can relate to all sides in the controversy humanely and with a sense of worth. Similarly in his response to the next question:

Did this change anything for you – opinions, feelings?

“Not this incident, no, but I think that serving during the Intifada has changed my opinions. When I was in high school, my opinions were rather right-wing, and after serving in the army, everything I went through in the Intifada, not that I started liking Palestinians, not at all, but I became more moderate. I became more moderate because you can see that their living conditions are harsh and, all in all, they are under our rule and are our responsibility. So it’s not that we have to do everything but they live in very harsh conditions, many in one room and without sewage, and the sewage flows in the streets. It’s not pity, but coming to terms with the fact it cannot go on like this and under these conditions. Other children will throw stones, grow up to be terrorists and this process won’t end if we don’t do something. So I’ve become more moderate in this direction, I can’t say it is because of any particular incident, but, all in all, serving during the Intifada has made me more moderate in this direction”.

Adi maintains that his perception of the Arabs has not changed as a result of his army service, but serving during the *Intifada* has made him reach conclusions regarding our desired behavior and this is because of the implications of the *Intifada* for us, for the army and for the nation. What has brought him to this conclusion is the possible harm to us and not particularly the harm done to them. “It’s not pity but coming to terms...other children will throw stones”. His worldview as an officer is that whoever is under our authority deserves elementary concern on one hand, and that their continuing to live under our rule, in these conditions, harms us.

“Serving there doesn’t do the army any good because in principle the army is humane, as much as it can be, and there are no orders to abuse the population...but every now and again there are always those ‘stars’ who go wild. The longer we are there the more this phenomenon will spread because there are a thousand and one incidents of abuse by soldiers or officers who have repressed things that they are now letting out. I’m not sure that they don’t behave violently at home...it’s asking for trouble”.

In this impersonal argument, Adi reiterates his concern for us as a humane army. One can sense his yearning for the monolithic Israeli-Jewish identity construction. In his attitude to ‘stars’, there is a contradiction in which he locates himself – on one hand the army is an ethical one, on the other hand Adi is witness to abuse. His intuitive explanation is that this is caused by ‘a few stars’, but this does not explain the increase in abuse. Therefore Adi seeks a solution by accusing the situation of ‘asking for trouble’.

“Do you have any examples?”

“There are many examples. We’d arrest guys in Gaza and they were locked up in tin huts until the Civil Authority or the police came to get them. At that time there was a guy there who would go in and just beat them for nothing, he wasn’t supposed to do it. He would beat them with a stick on the palms of their hands, and you don’t do this. You just don’t do this...and they’d come out with swollen, black hands. Or I saw border police, I don’t know if they were interrogating a group they’d caught, or asking questions, they lifted up the hood of an engine, the guy would put his hand there and they’d slam it down on his hand, they’d break his hands. Then there are those rubber bullets they put in rifles; they’re very dangerous at close range because they fly out powerfully. I saw guys firing into someone’s stomach from a range of a few meters away. That’s a serious wound to the stomach, it’s a crime after all, once they do this they’re criminals, but they aren’t guys that, before the Intifada, I’d have said were potential criminals. Absolutely normal people, that maybe the situation and everything going on...”

Here Adi tells us about some of the harder things he witnessed during the *Intifada*. "The act (of the soldiers) is a crime - ". He judges the acts by defining them as criminal. In a normal situation a criminal is punished for his crimes, but his reference to their actions is external (to the situation) and, in this way, it indirectly cleanses them of their guilt - it isn't them, it is the situation. Similarly, he also absolves himself of the responsibility for not having prevented them from committing such acts - his responsibility as a commander. And indeed, here too he resolves his own cognitive dissonance: I belong to a humane army, the soldiers are ordinary people who

became criminals. The conclusion: the situation is to blame. There is no reflection on Adi's part about who is responsible for this situation. Through the description, Adi gets to the third story where he describes how he twice lost control:

"I myself got into situations, I don't know if it's loss of control, but I didn't act according to my beliefs. We had returned from some incident in the center (of Israel) and were driving back by bus to the Territories. There is an instruction not to sleep in the Territories because, if something happens, a guy who is sleeping doesn't respond well, so you make sure that they stay awake. You make sure that they're not sleeping. It was evening, it was already dark, and the guys were always sleeping. Soldiers sleep in the bus; you can't do anything about it. So you get them on their feet and all kinds of nonsense to keep them awake, we were two buses, and they threw a Molotov cocktail. It passed through and exploded between the buses and caught fire on the road. So we stopped and the commanders got off and there was a point where we didn't see who threw it but we saw from which direction it came and soldiers got off, soldiers - I was one of them, we got off the bus and we got our weapons ready and we shot in the direction of the thicket there. Luckily, we didn't hit anybody because if we had hit someone it wouldn't have ended well, because you don't shoot without identifying an enemy. The instruction is to perform the arrest procedure for a suspect, unless you see him in the act of throwing, when he is endangering your life. But life-threatening danger had already passed, so we were not supposed to shoot, we were supposed to search, to search thoroughly and arrest, but not kill. That's one thing, and the other thing was, when we got back to the bus, it was, of all of them, a great guy, my best soldier, so I put him up against the bus and I shouted at him " - Do you understand now why you don't sleep, do you understand?" Now we are speaking quietly, but then it was with yelling and I didn't exactly put him up against the bus gently. So that's one time when I felt - here I lost control of myself a bit, and it's not right, but, perhaps, under the circumstances, it was appropriate. But the first part where we got off and shot, you don't do that, no matter how upset you are - you don't do that, not only according to our norms here, but according to the norms of the army... all in all, these are things that stay with you. I don't remember another incident like that, that you regret afterwards".

Adi takes responsibility and includes himself in the events: "people – I was one of them." He has a capacity for critical observation of his failures as an officer in the field and he examines the events on the basis of contemporary principles, perhaps even those of the period in which they took place. In this sense, he is an example of an officer who works on the monolithic construction of his identity and does not flinch from the implications thereof. It is against the

background of his concern for the army, his soldiers and his severe self-criticism as an officer that his indifference to the Palestinians particularly stands out. In this regard, one questions whether these were his only failures as an officer, or whether these were the failures he 'permitted' himself to remember, thereby forgetting the others (The Hypothesis of Paradoxical Morality – Bar-On & Charny, 1992)

In the next sequence (in response to our question), for the first time, there is an expression of his view of the Palestinians as being part of what shapes the way in which he understands his world - the 'victim- perpetrator' dichotomy. *"I thought that they hate us, that they don't want us... and I still don't think that they are crazy about us."* He defines his perception in the past and he emphasizes that it had not changed even in the light of present day reality. When he was asked whether they are different from us, he answered, saying that we as Jews are different from everybody else and he compares us to all of the Arabs, the Palestinians are similar to them and different from us. In this way, he establishes Jews as exceptional in comparison to all of the rest, and he avoids making a direct or equal comparison between Palestinians and ourselves. From this attitude - "us" as opposed to "them" - he goes into some detail with the help of three short examples:

"They tell you to arrest a person, so you do the job although you see their life is down the drain. So perhaps it clashes with smaller things. They tell you to impose a curfew and a couple is walking along the street and the woman is pregnant and she tells you I need to go to the hospital. So here, perhaps, it clashes and you need to use your judgment as commander (concerning) what works and what doesn't work, so here it clashes".

- How would you resolve such a case?

"Ah... I often think that I would send them back home because it has to be clear to them that the army doesn't relent or retreat. Maybe because this is our only advantage over them, because they know that we are organized and that when the army imposes something it is carried out. I once had an instance like that when I sent the couple back home and there was another instance when some old man was going by and he didn't feel well and I let him pass. So maybe it really depends on the mood. Listen - if someone really has doubts, there is no problem about referring to a higher level so that they can resolve it but, in principle, if it's an extreme case you don't need to give in, you need to stick to the primary task because that's where our strength (lies) in the situation of the Intifada. It has to be clear to them that there is unity here and that it is impossible to do a sloppy job."

It is difficult for Adi to suddenly deal with the day-to-day dilemmas created by the situation of military occupation of civilians. Concerning the specific question regarding his opinion after his army service during the *Intifada*, he answers in the present tense and he reverts to army language. This perhaps helps him deal with this dilemma. Adi is systematically strict about putting conflicting feelings and emotions aside in order to perform his job well. Adi states that the clash appears in smaller, humane issues about which he needs to decide: *"to use your judgment as a commander"*. The cover of the order defends him and aids him in distancing himself emotionally from the situation. When he has no specific order, he must become involved and this is difficult for him, despite the fact that he terms the situation - "smaller issues".

In the second instance - the couple on their way to the hospital – when he needs to use his judgment - whether to let the pregnant woman pass – he retreats to the central motto that constantly directs him, the superiority of the army. This time however, organization appears instead of morality. He raises the argumentation to justify the act that perhaps, deep within himself, he is not altogether at peace with - *"the army doesn't relent...when the army imposes something, it is carried out."* In the third description - he lets the old man pass despite the curfew, he feels that he must find an explanation for the fact that this is not in keeping with the army policy that had previously directed him and he uses his mood as an excuse. Perhaps he also felt a need to show us an example of when he behaved in a more "humane" manner, in order to temper the severity of the previous example. Adi closes the sequence by returning to the argumentation, to the collection of statements that virtually sounds like brainwashing. Sticking to the task, the force of the situation of the *Intifada*, the uniform policy, it is impossible to do a sloppy job... This may indicate that he feels the need to return to a safe shore of law and order in an attempt to hold on to the military way of understanding the world that protects him from insoluble human dilemmas.

Quite unexpectedly, a kind of 'confession' or reflection appears that breaks the sequence of the argumentation of the 'responsible' commander: - Do we succeed in showing that there is a uniform policy?

"In principle, I think so. But it still doesn't solve the problem. There was a stage after a certain period, when I stopped believing in things I do as commander, as a soldier, because I felt that the army doesn't intend to resolve these things either. I felt bad about the things I was doing. I said - I want to finish my army service quietly. I don't want these problems, let's say just any situation of rioting, or arrest of a suspect, and I might shoot and someone would be killed or wounded and then there'd be investigation committees and trials. I don't want all of these things. So perhaps I shirked my responsibility here... because at some point you understand that you can

run after kids who throw [stones] for a million years and in isolated cases even catch a kid who throws a stone, but he usually knows the place and you can't compete with him. And in these tasks, we'll call it police tasks, well perhaps I was sloppy, because... I didn't see the point; I didn't want to get into too much trouble. I don't know how many people this happened to. Personally, that's what I felt. That was only in the later stages, after enough time in the place, that's how I felt."

Adi's role as commander, which colored his service (and the interview up to this point), changes towards the end of his service to a more detached viewpoint: he stops believing in things that he does as commander because *"the army doesn't intend to resolve these things either"*. This is Adi's only attempt to move out of his monolithic interpretation based on his motto of responsibility as a commander. The language he uses is in the first person, very open, a small confession that does not appear by chance, perhaps an exception to the rule that proves the rule or perhaps a first sign of the ambivalence that characterizes disintegration of the monolithic construction. Perhaps this is a conceptual crisis that had occurred earlier and emerges today as a confession, in retrospect.

In the next sequence of the interview, Adi is asked how he perceives them (the Palestinians) as people. Adi shifts from relating impersonally to specific mention of a child who related to him (Adi, as a soldier) as a threat. Instead of answering the question regarding how he perceives them, Adi's answer reflects how they perceive us. Perhaps it is an argumentation that can explain the absence of his feeling toward them – it is impossible to love people who hate you with such a deep-rooted hate (the Hebrew root of the word "hate" reappears six times in the short sequence). In his opinion, peace can lessen our burden, but it is threatening in that it lets them progress and Adi, it seems, is scared of such a possibility.

Adi's conflicting feeling almost develops into a story, but ultimately he pulls away from it by using impersonal language: *"I remember once that... I remember times when you go in... to houses at night... and a little child looks at you and begins crying, terrified."* Here he details a certain instance - an expression of fear and terror from the viewpoint of the little boy who sees him only as a threatening soldier - something that shocks him and leaves him with unpleasant feelings *"because I know who I am, but to him, I am just some soldier who is walking around with a weapon and other things..."* Adi cannot bridge the distance between his self-perception as a humane and moral commander and the child's perception of him as a threat. This is a sensitive point for Adi - how the child as an individual perceived him and how he was perceived as a soldier, as an army commander. Perhaps the innocent Arab child, who looked at him with terror when he was conducting a search in his parents' house at night, is the only one who momentarily

touches Adi in his capacity as a real person. A moment of softness, a short hesitation. However, quite quickly the role of commander overcomes this personal contact which might have demanded a much more stringent internal confrontation.

Adi is asked about a future scenario:

"I wish I knew. In my opinion, the acts of terrorism will continue and the army will only have a harder time dealing (with them). Because when you are in the area, you can take care of things and when you have no right to act within their areas, it will be very hard for the army to deal with it. And we will be dependent on their security forces who won't necessarily meet us halfway. That is to say, perhaps they will have an interest in meeting us halfway and... I think that there is a need to do something, but I am very much afraid that perhaps we're going too far without security. If the business fails, or explodes, we will be in serious trouble because the territory is no longer under military control. The security forces will have a big problem taking action. I mean, if the whole thing blows up, and terrorist attacks start happening all the time, and (terrorist) squads infiltrate the country and kill and murder, I am quite sure that this phenomenon of extremist factions will only continue. That is to say, on one hand I don't really hope so, but I am also afraid because even if the politicians don't explain to the public exactly what is settled and how it is settled, a lot is not known and this not knowing is usually frightening. That's what I think will be. Hope with fear."

Here Adi moves into a neo-monolithic backlash. After the two previous sequences which were more personal and, perhaps, even showing some softness toward the alien 'Other', the new sequence suggests that Adi could not manage his feelings toward 'them'. His vision of the future scenario is pessimistic. One could assume (based on the slight 'moderation' in Adi's opinions and the fear of what the army service is doing to us) that the withdrawal of our army from the Occupied Territories would be perceived by Adi as a positive act. Yet he is troubled by the possibility of losing control to the Palestinians because he does not trust them. He feels that he needs many security measures (for the country, for the nation, for the citizens). In spite of the fact that he defines this as "hope with fear", in his words, it seems that there is more fear than hope. Adi returns to his previous formulae. However, this time Adi relates his pessimism as ongoing fear of the Palestinians. There is also an interesting explanation why. Peace may create a certain threat to our own identity as a distinct collective:

"I know that I am personally not interested in co-existence. I want to live my life here. I don't want to go buy something in Gaza or have him come here to buy from me. I have no problem continuing this way, he in his corner, with his work. If it is possible for the workers from

the Territories to stop working in Israel, then they shouldn't come to work here. They should have enough jobs there. In my opinion, the less interaction with them, the better. Personally, that's what I think. I have no desire for anyone from Gaza to open up a grocery store. I have no problem with it continuing the way it is today. I would prefer not to rub shoulders with them because... again, it's a matter of building up trust, there is always the chance that someone with whom you are in daily contact will stab you. And it's a matter of building up trust that will take a lot more time before these gaps are bridged...I have no desire to live in co-existence. From my point of view, they should live their lives in Gaza, in what they are allotted in Judah and Samaria. They should enter Israel as little as possible."

Is it only a matter of a lack of trust, which can be solved one day?

"I don't know. I am not interested in some rich Palestinian buying a villa nearby. If we go to great extremes, let's go as far as is possible, with mixed marriages between Jews and Palestinians, and Palestinian people living here, so the borders become blurred and, if we go further, in many more years, in the best way possible, we will lose our identity as a people and... I don't know if that's good, I mean, maybe, maybe not."

It is interesting to note how capable Adi was, in March 1994, of prophesying how things would indeed proceed during the following decade. Here, in effect, it is possible to identify the first signs of the idea of dissociation and separation, lately a motto in the Israeli discourse as a result of the continuation of terrorist suicide attacks. However, Adi adds a new argument that has not yet appeared in our manifest, collective discourse - the explicit fear of losing a distinct, Jewish identity as a result of assimilation into the Arab culture. 'Maybe it's good' - is said more as a way of rhetoric. Adi is afraid that nothing unifying will remain once 'they' cease being our 'enemy'. Later on, Adi spells out his prejudices towards the Palestinians, explaining that, in his opinion, there is no difference between Israeli Arabs and Arabs from the Territories. Thus, in a way, Adi clarifies his uneasiness of having to live in the Middle East, his sense of cultural superiority.

"The mentality is different, even the smell is different. When you stand in the home of a Palestinian family - it stinks - there's nothing you can do about it. The house stinks and me, I come from Israeli society, I had a hard time with the smell of their food... when the woman there cleans, she empties the bucket outside her door, into the street, and we don't act that way... you spoke about the Belgians, well our mentality is closer to the European mentality than to theirs as Arab people, I don't know..."

Aren't we both Semitic people?

"That's true. But I think that our mentality is closer to the European mentality than the Arab people. It doesn't matter where it comes from - the mentality is different. And to change a mentality, it's not as if I could now put them into some fancy neighborhood and they would immediately act differently. It would take a good number of years. I don't know, scores of years in order for things to change."

Is it connected only to external things or also to internal ones?

"It's connected, it's connected to how people dress, for no reason, an attitude towards women. Ah, a woman, like in every Muslim culture who doesn't have much significance and she is silent beside the men, and all kinds of...I don't see you being quiet around men like that...it's different. And dress, that's the way it is, it's dress. And what else? Well that's it...maybe it's a result of conditions where everybody sleeps together, where they grow up as extended families and when a couple marries, they build another room and they live together. Their religion is also different and that has an effect, that is, a lot of their mentality is a result of their religion. The Islamic religion is a lot stricter than our religion. Let's imagine them moving into the best living conditions there are, until the mentality changes, in my opinion, it would take an entire generation for it to pass. Perhaps in the generation after us it will be a lot easier to agree to cooperative living or things like that, but I am not so hot about living cooperatively with them, that is to say, for me to live separately is good enough. What's so bad now, what do I need to run after? Things are good enough as they are. That is, I don't think that anyone would like, that is if we go to extremes, a son or daughter to marry a Muslim, a Palestinian. I believe that most people, even the most left-wing, wouldn't like that."

The language in which Adi summarizes his thoughts is theoretical, impersonal.

Throughout the entire sequence, Adi presents a neo-monolithic construction of cultural superiority emphasizing the differences between them and ourselves. He begins from external signs - smell, cleanliness, dress - he moves on to more ambiguous internal values - the attitude toward women, the way of life, and he finds the root of their 'mentality' hidden in their 'stricter' religion. Adi's entire description is clouded by value judgments without any self-criticism or moral restrictions. He assumes that in order for us to be able to live together with them (and he emphasizes that he has no desire to do so), they need to change and "grow", to reach our cultural level. Once again Adi repeats the imagined threat of loss of identity through inter-marriage, a thing that he believes even the "leftists" would not like. The gaps may be closed within one generation, but still, *"I wouldn't want to live with them"*.

In conclusion, this chapter brings us to the present stage of the stress characterizing the whirlwind: Disintegration of the monolithic construction on one hand and neo-monolithic backlash on the other hand. The words of Adi, as the expressions used by Shimon in the previous chapter, indicate a complexity of conflicting emotions and deliberations on a micro level, that of the individual commander, that represent some of the deliberations on the macro level. One can sense the heavy burden the Israeli-Jewish officer had to bear when serving during the *Intifada*. Not every soldier may have been so moral, open and courageous as Shimon and Adi, but their viewpoint had undoubtedly revealed something of the emotional weight and distress they felt during and following their army service. The honesty and force of their words makes the silence and stammering of political leaders or professionals even more salient (Bar-On, 2001). When did we last hear an Israeli leader discussing the dilemmas raised by Adi and Shimon with that courage and clarity? This might be the reason for the alienation expressed by Shimon and the attitude to the ‘situation’ expressed by Adi when seeking whom to blame for the situations he and his soldiers faced. We do not know when a thorough, public debate concerning these questions will take place, but I imagine that when this will happens, it will be also a debate concerning the monolithic and neo-monolithic constructions of Israeli-Jewish identity, and it won’t be by chance that this debate will have to challenge the military aspect of these identity constructions.

Window 5

During the first weeks of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, in October 2000, I felt quite paralyzed. I could not believe that all that has been invested in the last few years in the peace process is going down the drain. I tried to behave as if this is only a temporary mistake. I continued to go to Talitha Kumi near Beit Jala to meet with Professor Sami Adwan, as we have been doing since 1998, when we started PRIME (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East). I felt committed to the course we had embarked on and, as he could not come to meet me in Israel, I went to see him at our office even though it was sometimes dangerous because of the shootings. We tried to focus on our current study: An attempt to characterize and evaluate the environmental Israeli and Palestinian NGOs. It soon became impossible to focus on these issues. When people are being killed, the issues of sewage and waste, even of water shortage, seem unimportant. We found ourselves working on a study that was designed under the assumptions that we were in the midst of a progressing Peace Process. But now the context has gone backward: we were in the middle

of a violent outbreak that was destroying these assumptions and the precious hope, in addition to the destruction of lives.

As an Israeli-Jew, I had to recognize our own inability to let go our monolithic construction. I felt that Israel was to blame for allowing Ariel Sharon make his provocative, power-oriented visit to the Al Aqsa Mosque in September 2000. I also thought that President Clinton and Prime Minister Barak were not wise in their handling of the Camp David encounter with Chairman Arafat, which led to its failure in July 2000. I felt that many of the Palestinians complaints toward Israel, concerning the on-going occupation and the way Israel went on building the settlements in the occupied territories, were justified. But I also could understand from where the fear of the Israeli-Jews originated, when being attacked by suicide bombers and when watching the level of hatred instigated by the Palestinians. At the same time, I admired Sami for his persistence and willingness to continue our work, and identified with his pain when there was shooting around his house, while I could live more or less safely in mine.

The number of Palestinians who were killed everyday was devastating. It became clear that Israel was using excessive force to suppress the Palestinian uprising. At the same time, I was afraid that the violent struggle might make things worse. That at some point the same issues that had been on the negotiation table in 2000 would have to be addressed. Only with more people that were going to join the cycle of hatred as a result of the current events.

Alongside technical difficulties of continuing our joint projects, a deeper understanding slowly emerged, especially after the Israeli elections in February 2001. I had to admit that neither side was ripe for a political solution and much working through will have to be achieved for such a ripeness to be established. I still felt that our mutual commitment to PRIME was an important anchor in such a process. But now the possibility for a political solution became much more distant than it had been a few months ago.

3.2 Why did the Al Aqsa Intifada backlash win over the gains of the Oslo Accord?

The outbreak of violence between Palestinians and Israelis, in October 2000, has many different and deeper reasons. In a way, it signaled the end of the Oslo Process. The Oslo Accord in 1993 was a top-down process that created an illusion of mutual ripeness for a historical compromise between Israel and the PLO, as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The two nations seemed to be ready to let go their ethnocentric and monolithic dreams and to share the land between the sea and the Jordan River to create two separate states: The State of Israel as a Jewish State and a Palestinian State. It was clear that in 1993 politicians of

both sides were not yet ready to agree on the difficult issues, such as the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, the division of Jerusalem and the evacuation of the Israeli Settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. Still, the assumption behind Oslo Accord was that in the following years after 1993, the process would yield enough mutual gains and trust that these would eventually enable both sides to come to an agreement on the more difficult issues.

In reality, the level of mutual mistrust has become even higher since the Oslo Accord. The murder of Prime Minister Rabin, the vicious Palestinian terror attacks and Israeli continuous building in the settlements and occupation of Palestinian territories showed how deep and extensive was the drive to prevent a solution, rather than enhance it. The extremists on both sides actually reinforced each other instead of the more moderate parts of the society reinforcing one another, as the architects of Oslo assumed. The Palestinian leadership, pressed by the Israelis to promise them a sense of personal security, lost credibility in the eyes of their own public. At the same time the Israeli leadership, was too weak to struggle with right-wing extremism, especially with the settlers in the West Bank and Gaza. From my perspective both sides were not ripe for the dialogical stage in their collective identity construction. Such ripeness for complexity of the dialogical stage would be a necessary condition for making the pragmatic political concessions, required of both sides.

One could actually claim that the Jewish-Israeli population had shown remarkable progress since 1993. If in 1993 one could not talk openly in Israel about the possibility of a Palestinian State, in 2001 it was Sharon himself, the right wing leader, who accepted such a possibility. If the vision of "An Eternal United Jewish-Israeli Jerusalem" has been a cornerstone for all leaders of both sides of the Israeli political map, in 2000 Barak made it quite clear that Jerusalem will in the end become the capital also of the Palestinian State. Even though public opinion swept overwhelmingly toward the right wing after the violent outbreak of October 2000, the majority of the Jewish population still wanted the negotiations with the Palestinians to continue, until a settlement would be reached. In 2003-4 Prime Minister Sharon proposed the uni-lateral removal of settlements from the Gaza Strip.

But one could also observe the limits of the Israeli flexibility. The violence brought about a backlash in Jewish public opinion as to the "real" intentions of the Palestinians: Are they really willing to accept a permanent Jewish State or is Oslo only a stage in their long-term intentions to make Israel part of a larger Palestinian State? There was no Jewish-Israeli leader who could accept the Palestinian interpretation of the "right of return"; that all Palestinian refugees, who wanted to, could be allowed to return to their homes and property in Israel. According to Jewish-Israeli consensus, Israel should remain a State with a clear Jewish majority. Very few Israeli-

Jews were willing to compromise on this matter. The resettlement of the Palestinian refugees had, therefore, to be achieved mainly outside the State of Israel. This issue became the major obstacle in the previous negotiations (even in the Geneva initiative in 2003), in addition to certain symbolic arguments related to the holy Jewish places in Jerusalem. This fear actually re-created the need among the Jewish-Israeli majority for a neo-monolithic construction.

For the Palestinians, the dragging of the implementation of the Oslo process by Prime Minister Netanyahu and by Prime Minister Barak raised old-new Palestinian fears of Israel's lack of willingness to make concessions. Over the past decade, Israel has enabled one million Jews, mostly from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, to immigrate to Israel under the Jewish Law of Return. Israel continued to build new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza and new houses in the old settlements, regardless of the political orientation of its leadership. Israeli-Jews spoke about peace in negative terms of their personal security, but were not willing to share resources such as land and water, in addition to demanding predominant military control. There was a growing feeling among the Palestinians, who were looking for a just peace (Shasha-Beiton, 2002), that the role of the PNA was perceived by the Israel as a safeguard that would protect them from the Palestinian extremists (Hamas and Jihad), rather than establishing an independent State of their own. Neither side was thinking in terms of positive peace: What both sides could gain of such a process. Palestinians continued to work in Israel as its manual labor force, with almost total economic dependency on Israel's economy. The Palestinians needed a monolithic collective identity construction of their own, separate from the "dependent" and "occupied" Palestinian identity. The years after Oslo did not help create such a momentum, in addition to their insecurity stemming from previous oppressed identity, by the Ottomans, British, Egyptians and Jordanians.

The violent outbreak in October 2000 brought to the forefront another, more specific agenda that was dismissed, or seen earlier as a less important one: The agenda of the Palestinian-Israeli minority (or Arab-Israeli minority²) (Kimmerling, 2002). Israeli-Jews surprised by the Palestinian-Israelis, when the latter played an active role in the October 2000 uprising. The devastating result was that the police shot and killed thirteen of their youngsters during the first ten days of the uprising. Never had a public demonstration in Israel been suppressed so aggressively. This turn of events put a special highlight on the Palestinian-Israeli agenda: Should they be seen only as part of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or should their demands/needs be

² - These names reflect part of the dispute or the definition of the agenda: Are they part of the Palestinian nation and emerging State, or are they part of Israel, an Arab minority in a Jewish State? I will use here the form of Palestinian-Israeli minority, in order not to make a political statement. This definition is wide enough to enable the members of this community to define themselves as Palestinians, as Israeli or as both Palestinians and Israeli.

regarded as a separate issue? Palestinian-Israelis had their own collective identity crisis after Oslo. If until Oslo they perceived themselves as the go-between the Israeli-Jews and the Palestinians, especially when these parties totally denounced each other, now they found themselves betrayed by both sides. They were not even invited to Oslo and its following Accords.

The detrimental outcome of October 2000 events became one of the major reasons why the Palestinian-Israeli population decided to boycott the 2001 elections, paradoxically helping Sharon defeat Barak by a margin of 23% - the widest margin ever achieved in an Israeli election. One should remember that in the 1999 elections, more than ninety percent of the Israeli Arabs minority voted for Barak. Now they felt that he had betrayed them. Barak did not try, like Rabin had tried before, to address and work on solving their neglected issues. Barak did not even acknowledge their demands, including their warnings not to let Sharon enter the Al Aqsa Mosque. Perhaps Barak's logic was that their issues should be addressed only after an Israeli - Palestinian solution was attained, and that he did not want to be accused, as Rabin had been, of leaning too heavily on their vote. As a result, Barak lost the sympathy of the Palestinian-Israelis and could not make any progress on either of the two Palestinian agenda.

The special problems of the Arab minority in Israel have been handled very poorly since Israeli became a state over fifty years ago (Kimmerling, 2002). First, they were suspected of being part of the Arab enemy that should be feared. After the 1967 war, when the acute feeling of danger diminished, the Israeli-Jews, committed to their monolithic identity construction, saw the Palestinian-Israelis more as a burden than as an asset (in terms of a link to the Arab World). The political approach of the Israeli leadership was that Israel should focus on the more immediate, macro military and political Palestinian-Israeli problems, as the Arab minority in Israel is anyway part of the Arab hostile world. There was, at that time, no differentiation of the Palestinian-Israeli minority as part of, yet separated from the Palestinian issue. This created a very complex and difficult situation for the Palestinian-Israelis: They could neither win with the Israeli-Jews nor with the Palestinians. They tried to find a way to "walk between the drops" (Kimmerling, in press; Peled, 1992; Samooaha, 1992; Al Haj, 1988).

One should remember that the Palestinian-Israeli minority was a small remnant of a wider population that lived in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Many of their people and family members were forced to leave or fled as a result of the 1948 war and the violent outbreak after the UN decided in favor of the partition plan in 1947. Many family members of the Palestinian-Israeli minority are still living in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and in the PNA. During and after the 1948 war, Israel initiated an evacuation of part of the

population of the Bedouins and Palestinian-Israelis (Morris, 1999). Those who remained, however, had to live under a military regime till 1966, suspected of being potential "collaborators" with the enemies in the Arab countries that were still at war with Israel. Even after the military regime was lifted, many of the Palestinian-Israeli rights were neglected, in terms of schooling, housing, occupational choices and other civil rights. For example, those who wanted to become teachers had to go through a special investigation by the Israeli secret services. Others were refused jobs because they had not served in the army, etc.

In the last years since Oslo one can see a change in the way the Palestinian-Israeli leadership set a separate agenda. In a way, they were constructing now their own monolithic collective identity, separate from both the Palestinian and from the Jewish-Israeli ones. They emphasize the inequality they suffer from in Israel, but also emphasize that they do not want to become part of the Palestinian State. These aspects of inequality within Israeli society are framed within a current dispute over Israel being a civic democratic society versus a Jewish State. For example, many Arabs complain, that they can wait for years to get certain rights that a new immigrant from Russia receives automatically. This inequality becomes even more apparent when we compare the right of return of Jews (who never lived in Israel) to the negation of the same rights for family members of Israeli Arabs who still live in refugee camps in Lebanon or Syria. In an interview addressing this issue³, Sami Michael (an Israeli well known Author, who was a member of the Joint Jewish-Arab Communist party in the fifties) claimed that too many Jews and Arabs populate this country today, creating vast environmental problems. Therefore, he thinks that both rights of returns should be equally refuted from now on.

From the current discussion we can learn that the deeper level of the unresolved conflict had to do with the assertion that both the Palestinians and the Israeli-Jews were not truly ready to move forward with the political arrangement because they were incapable of accepting each other's "Otherness." I would like here to focus on the Jewish-Israeli apprehension of the Arab "Other," our ambivalence regarding our internalized aggression and our fear of the end of the conflict.

Our apprehension of the other is related to our deep mistrust concerning the sincerity of the Palestinians' intentions. We are afraid that when 'they' speak of peace this is actually part of a long-term plan to annihilate us. We could find this aspect in Adi's narrative. Our ambivalent approach toward the use of force and aggression is a remnant of the monolithic identity construction and causes us to feel both very strong and powerful and very weak and vulnerable at the same time. This ambivalence reinforces our self-perception as eternal victims and heroism,

³ - Conducted by the author in February 2001 (Bar-On, in press).

still related to the Diaspora Jew. This ambivalence causes us to feel mainly the harm the other side inflicts upon us and to be insensitive to what we are inflicting upon them. Our fear of the end of the conflict is associated with the fact that many Israeli-Jews have constructed their identity around the conflict and its end will demand a fearful reconstruction. We will have to redefine who are we if we are not determined, through our negation of the 'Other', and the hatred of the others toward us.

In this process of our collective identity reconstruction, the Palestinian-Israelis could become an asset rather than a burden. Throughout the years that they have lived among us, they have gotten to know us, sometimes, better than we know ourselves (Habibi, 1988). For their own survival, this group had to develop a social representation of themselves separate from the way they saw us, in terms of their collective identity formation (Moscovici, 1976). For many of them, this meant a complex and diversified internal representation of themselves in relation to at least two "Others": the dominant Israeli Jew and the Palestinians in the occupied territories and in their Palestinian refugee Diaspora. The Jewish-Israelis, on the other hand essentially developed a monolithic identity construction that was based on the simple negation of the others who "hate us and want to annihilate us" (Bar-On, 1999). Once we will be able to move out of this monolithic identity construction and its neo-monolithic backlash into a more complex and dialogical one, the Palestinian-Israelis could be helpful in showing us the way. At least those of them who are willing to share with us the "Others" with whom they have been in an open dialogue.

One could ask - why are the Israeli-Jews more apprehensive today toward the Palestinians in comparison to 1993? The apprehension has two parts – fear for oneself related to the deconstruction of one's monolithic identity and fear of the 'Other' and their destructive intentions. If in 1993, Israeli-Jews were exposed only to the first dynamic, today they are exposed to both, especially after October 2000. These two fears reinforced each other in a vicious cycle that was very difficult to break through. These two fears were probably anchored in our long Diaspora heritage, in our insecurity as an autonomous civic society and in our hesitation regarding our integration into the culture of the Middle Eastern region, in which we are a small alien Jewish minority. Right now we are also a despised one because of our attributed strength and due to the way we handle the Palestinian problem. Also, one should recognize that the recent violent events did not help cope better with these fears.

In this complex situation, one would expect our leadership to find ways to desensitize these apprehensions and help us integrate our ambivalence regarding our own aggressiveness and vulnerability. But if we analyze the deeds of our leaders since Oslo Accord, regardless of whether it was Netanyahu or Barak or Sharon, they actually intensified these anxieties, rather

than desensitized them. These leaders showed little understanding of long-term social processes and actually learned how to manipulate the weakness of the society as part of their political power games. In addition, the murder of Rabin created a kind of panic that made us worry whether we are capable of maintaining a just and democratic civic society. Different social fractions learned from the electoral victory of the right wing, after Rabin's murder, that the use of force is paying and the more you use it, the more resources you may gain. This became the name of the game instead of decision making based mutual concessions for the benefit of the whole society. The use of force intensified the fear: You have to beware not only of those who face you but also of those behind you. Therefore, in analyzing our leadership's failure, one should focus less on their personality and more on the non-democratic socializing school in which they were brought up. We should also focus on ourselves and ask – how did the whirlwind made us let such persona control our lives and actually intensify our anxieties instead of reducing them?

Today, Israel and Palestine seem like a giant laboratory in which green and blue mice (in order not to say black and white) have been raised. Now, as there are too many mice, the experimenters have decided to reduce the oxygen in the lab and systematically torture the mice through starvation. The researchers ask - when will the mice start to eat each other? Will they eat more of their own kind or more of the other? And those who survive – will they develop a more peaceful and democratic relationship or will they continue to eat each other forever? The difference between the analogy and the reality in the Middle East is that we are both the mice and the experimenters. The oxygen is the hope for a peaceful future that is fading away from day to day and the torture through starvation is, for many of the Palestinians a reality, and for us, the daily sight of wiping the blood off the streets, the cars, the buses.