The role of direct-experience people in promoting transitional justice: The Israeli case

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Abstract

Transitional justice is a major concept in promoting peace and reconciliation between conflicting parties. It is usually associated with formal judicial processes such as criminal justice, rule-of-law reform and paying reparations. This chapter focuses on another transitional justice method, a more informal one: memory work. There is a growing realization of the major impact on the way in which the history of a conflict is viewed by the members of parties involved on their psychological and behavioral reactions. Addressing that history properly can promote their well being, conflict resolution and reconciliation between the parties. There are many ways of addressing the relevant history, for example, through truth and reconciliation committees, the rewriting of history textbooks, and commemoration projects. This chapter focuses on another way: the role of the autobiographical memory, that of the people who experienced the conflict directly, as it is manifested in their memoirs, newspaper articles and interviews with scholars.

To this end the chapter uses a case study approach, regarding the causes for the main historical event of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the 1948 Palestinian exodus. It explores for the first time the way in which Israeli-Jewish 1948 war veterans presented these causes between 1949 and 2004. The question posed was: did their autobiographical memory present a Zionist narrative (willing flight of the Palestinians) or a critical/post-Zionist narrative (willing flight combined with expulsion)? This exploration is based on an analysis of all published war veterans’ memoirs and newspaper articles, as well as interviews with scholars, in the 56 year research period. During this study, interviews were also conducted with 1948 war veterans. Following the description of the empirical findings regarding the Israeli-Jewish autobiographical memory of the exodus, these findings are used to theoretically conceptualize various phenomena. For example, what determines the way in which direct-experience people describe their experiences during a conflict, how these people influence directly and indirectly the collective memory of their society of a given conflict, and the way in which they influence the dynamics of
a conflict. Other aspects that are discussed are the autobiographical memory special characteristics compared to other sources from the past (e.g., documents), and the special characteristics of memory work as part of transitional justice which makes it especially important in two manners: compared to other mechanisms of transitional justice (e.g., forensic ones), and especially in pre-resolution contexts. Thus, this paper is relevant specifically to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as to other conflicts worldwide.
1. INTRODUCTION

Transitional justice is a major concept in promoting peace, justice and reconciliation in the context of political violence. Such violence is defined broadly here to include: interstate and intrastate conflicts, genocide, despotic regimes, severe human rights abuses, and colonialism (hereafter ‘conflicts’). Transitional justice (TJ) includes various formal methods that are intended to promote justice and peace. Oftentimes these methods are judicial and political ones such as criminal justice, amnesties, lustrations policies, rule-of-law institutional reform, and reparations. This chapter focuses on another TJ method – memory work. There is a growing realization of the major impact that the way in which the history of a conflict is viewed by the parties involved, has on the parties’ psychological reactions. Consequently, this affects their behaviour in ways that might either promote or inhibit sustainable peace, reconciliation, and safe transition to democracy. In addition to the various possible mechanisms that have been discussed as addressing this history, this chapter proposes a new one, an informal mechanism not intended to promote peace or justice: the role of the people who experienced the conflict directly, as it is manifested through their memoirs, newspaper articles and interviews with scholars.


To this end I use a case study approach, addressing the major historical event of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the 1948 Palestinian exodus. I explore the way in which Israeli-Jewish (‘Israelis’) 1948 war veterans, between 1949 and 2004, presented the causes of the exodus. Did they present, for example, a Zionist narrative (willing flight of the Palestinians) or a critical/post-Zionist narrative (willing flight combined with expulsion)? Let us start with a review of some of the relevant literature.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Collective memory in general, and that of conflicts in particular, have recently gained salience in academic, public and diplomatic spheres, and is often referred to as the ‘memory boom’. Collective memory is a general category that includes various kinds of memories. Among the main kinds is first, the popular memory, or, representations of the past held by the society’s members, best manifested directly by public opinion surveys. This kind of memory significantly influences socio-psychological phenomena such as emotions, motivations, stereotypes and ethos -- and thereby the behavioural reactions of the people holding the memory. Second is the official memory, representations of the past adopted by the formal institutions of a society. This type of

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memory is manifested, for instance, in publications by state ministries and the army, exhibitions in national museums, and textbooks approved for use in the educational system.\(^8\) Third is the *autobiographical* memory, that of the people who directly experienced the given events. It is manifested, inter alia, in oral history projects and memoirs.\(^9\)

All of these kinds of memories include narratives on various topics. A narrative is basically a story about major events\(^{10}\) occurring over time that has a plot with a clear starting point and endpoint and that provides sequential and causal coherence.\(^{11}\) Specifically, narratives of a *conflict* describe its eruption and course, typically inaccurately. They are selective and biased, providing a simplistic black-and-white view of the conflict, in such a way that supports the interests of the in-group -- which portrays itself in an unrealistically positive way, and its rival in a distortedly negative light.\(^{12}\)

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\(^{10}\) For a discussion about major events and their characteristics see: R. Nets-Zehngut, Major Events and the Collective Memory of Conflicts’. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, (2013).


Such use of biased historical narratives of a conflict is functional during the peak of the conflict, since it helps to mobilize the citizens and get the support of the international community. Such use, however, also inhibits de-escalation of the conflict and its peaceful resolution and the parties’ reconciliation. Thus, the more significantly a party’s memory can be transformed so as to adopt less biased narratives (when there is factual basis for such a transformation, as there usually is) the more the party’s psychological and behavioural reactions can accommodate peace and reconciliation. The rival then can be viewed in more legitimized, humanized, personalized, and differentiated ways.13

This is why TJ puts so much emphasis on memory work. Many TJ mechanisms that address the history of conflicts are discussed in the literature — such as museums, memorials, history textbooks reform, truth and reconciliation committees, historical projects that present historical narratives of the conflicts, and committees or NGOs that negotiate them. All of these mechanisms are directed at positively transforming the collective memories of the parties and are used by societal and state institutions.14 Thus, it is suggested here to regard them as formal and justice/peace motivated mechanisms.


In summary, the literature that addresses the history of conflicts through TJ focuses on formal and justice/peace motivated mechanisms. In this chapter I aim to contribute theoretically to the literature by suggesting an informal and non-justice/peace motivated mechanism of addressing this history; this consists of identifying various ways in which direct-experience people address their memories of conflict. Descriptions of how Israeli 1948 war veterans addressed the 1948 exodus will constitute the empirical contribution of the chapter. Let us then describe the background of the case study.

3. THE 1948 PALESTINIAN EXODUS AND ITS MEMORY IN ISRAEL

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is largely an intractable conflict that has lasted for about a century, causing severe damage to the parties involved. In this context, the exodus of some 650,000 Palestinians during the 1948 War in which they fought, alongside several Arab countries, against the Jews/Israelis, has great political and psychological importance for both sides. The parties hold different memories about the causes of the exodus.

As for the Israelis, the initially dominant narrative, post-1948, was the Zionist one. This narrative claims that the Palestinians left willingly due to fear as well as to blanket appeals from "Zionist" here. This is why counter narratives to this narrative were called, inter alia, ‘post-Zionist’ -- that is, appearing or gaining prevalence after the Zionist narrative.

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16 The narrative that presented the willing flight of the Palestinians in 1948 was predominant during the first decades of Israel, when most Israeli society subscribed to the Zionist ideology – and is therefore labeled “Zionist” here. This is why counter narratives to this narrative were called, inter alia, ‘post-Zionist’ -- that is,
the Palestinian and Arab leadership to leave their homes. Acts of expulsion by Jews/Israelis were not noted and were often denied.\textsuperscript{17} This narrative was disseminated in Israel through the publications of state institutions such as the National Publications Agency, the Ministry of Education, and the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces, the Israeli army).\textsuperscript{18} Until the late 1970s, the state was almost totally supported in this dissemination endeavour by members of various Israeli societal institutions, such as intellectuals, scholars, journalists and authors.\textsuperscript{19}

The dominance in Israel of the Zionist narrative regarding the exodus began to be challenged, mainly in the late 1970s, by societal institutions. Many scholarly publications\textsuperscript{20} and newspaper articles presented a critical narrative regarding the exodus.\textsuperscript{21} According to this narrative, some of the Palestinians left willingly (due, for instance, to partial calls by the Arab/Palestinian leadership to leave, as well as to fear and societal collapse), while others were expelled by the Jews/Israelis. This societal change intensified in the late 1980s with the


\textsuperscript{21} Nets-Zehngut, ‘Overview.’
commencement of an historical revisionist period commonly called the ‘New Historians’ era.\textsuperscript{22} New history books criticized additional aspects of the Zionist narrative of the conflict, or supported criticism that had been raised earlier. The major figure among these critics was the historian Benny Morris. His most discussed findings dealt with the 1948 exodus and were published in 1987 in a book of broad scope which supported the critical narrative.\textsuperscript{23} Since the late 1980s, the publication of critical newspaper articles has also increased, to the extent that most studies and articles since then have presented the critical narrative. The state institutions, however, continued to present the Zionist narrative, at least until 2004 -- except for the Ministry of Education; since 2000, its approved textbooks for the national-secular system have presented the critical narrative.\textsuperscript{24} Similarly, in 2005 the Israeli National Archive published a book containing documents related to the late Premier Yitzhak Rabin, describing the largest expulsion in 1948, that of the residents of the Palestinian cities of Lydda and Ramla.\textsuperscript{25}

In summary, we can see that the interpretation of the exodus in Israel has changed drastically since the late 1970s, from an almost exclusively Zionist one to a significantly critical one.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Nets-Zehngut} Nets-Zehngut, ‘Overview.’
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According to the Palestinians’ official memory, as indicated in approved history textbooks, they were all expelled in 1948 by the Jewish/Israeli fighting forces. The Palestinians also reject the claim that the exodus was an outcome of encouragement by their leaders and those of the Arab countries to leave.26

4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter is based on various articles and books – published, under review, or in preparation – that address the ways in which Israeli veterans of 1948 presented, between 1949 and 2004, the causes of the exodus, in their memoirs, newspaper articles and interviews by scholars. The chapter addresses this period because it is the period most discussed by relevant analyzed publications. This is the first discussion to consider all of these publications in an integrated way while analyzing them through the theoretical prism of TJ.

5. ISRAELI 1948 WAR VETERANS ADDRESSING THE EXODUS

Between 1949 and 2004, these veterans addressed the causes of the exodus in three main ways.

1. Memoirs. Some of these memoirs were personal ones, addressing for the most part only each individual author’s experiences during and occasionally before or after the 1948 War. Other memoirs were collective ones, dealing with the experiences in that war of various fighting

units such as regiments, brigades, and battalions. These latter memoirs were typically written by committees of veterans. One study analyzed all of the memoirs written in Hebrew and published between 1949 and 2004, that addressed the exodus.

The latter study found that the narratives presented in both types of memoirs could be divided into three main periods: (1) 1949-1968 – Zionist memoirs: during this period all the memoirs presented the Zionist narrative. A typical example is the following quotation from the Givaty Brigade memoir: ‘Following the shelling, the Arabs of [the village] Abu-Shusha started running away from the village […] at the beginning of May most of the residents of the village [Zarnuga] left it […]’; (2) 1969-1978 – Zionist memoirs and initial critical memoirs: the vast majority presented the Zionist narrative, while an insignificant number offered the critical one. For example, veteran Uri Avnery asserts that, ‘In this phase [first of the war] a certain number of Arabs ran away […] usually the Arabs were encouraged to leave their villages and cities by their leaders as well as by the Jewish army […] in this phase [after the invasion of the Arabs armies to Israel] the expulsion of the Arab population became a concrete target of Ben-Gurion and his government’; (3) 1979-2004 – Zionist memoirs and expansion in critical memoirs: only about two thirds of the memoirs presented the Zionist narrative. The rest presented the critical one. A central example is Yitzhak Rabin's 1979 memoir ‘Pinkas Sheirut’. Rabin was Israel's Prime Minister.


Minister prior to publishing his memoir and a mid-level officer in 1948. He included in the draft of his memoir a section describing the Lydda–Ramla expulsion. This section was censored by a ministerial committee but leaked to the public sphere – first in the U.S. and from there to Israel – and led to the eruption of a major controversy in Israel with regard to whether expulsions took place in 1948 or not. Therefore, for its essence and impact on Israel, this memoir is addressed here with its censored section.\(^\text{30}\)

We can see then that over the years there was a gradual transformation in the way the memoirs described the exodus: from an exclusively Zionist perspective to a partially critical one, increasingly so as of the third period starting in the late 1970s.\(^\text{31}\)

2. Newspaper articles. The veterans also addressed the exodus via newspaper articles. As noted above, one study analyzed all of the articles published between 1949 and 2004 in Hebrew; these appeared in the five main Israeli dailies (‘Al-Hamishmar’, ‘Davar’, ‘Ha’aretz’, ‘Ma’ariv’, and ‘Yediot Achronoth’).\(^\text{32}\) This study found that until the late 1970s, the veterans hardly addressed the exodus at all, and when they did they presented the Zionist narrative. They only began addressing the exodus with a critical narrative, to a significant extent, in the late 1970s. Many of the earlier articles that did so were published as part of the ‘Hirbet Hiza’ controversy which erupted in early 1978. The controversy addressed a film by that name produced in Israel based on a book with the same name published in 1949. The book/film describes the seizure of a


\(^{31}\) Nets-Zehngut, ‘Israeli 1948 War Veterans’.

Palestinian village in 1948 by Israeli soldiers and the expulsion of its residents. The film was supposed to be broadcast on the Israeli national television channel, and controversy initially revolved mostly around the question of whether it should be broadcast at all. After the film’s broadcast, the controversy turned to whether or not expulsions did take place in 1948.\(^{33}\) Many of the veterans that took part in the controversy claimed that expulsions did take place. For example, Moshe Carmel, the Jewish/Israeli commander of the North Front in the 1948 War, wrote in a 2.19.78 article: ‘[…] there is no need to deny that during the battles of the War of Independence [the Israeli name for the 1948 War] there were incidents that Arab residents were transferred from their villages […] we also knew […] injuries and expulsions that were not justified, whether they were done according to orders or not’.\(^{34}\)

3. Interviews by scholars. Until the late 1970s, the veterans refused to disclose in interviews they gave to Israeli scholars that expulsions took place in 1948. This is what happened, for example, to the scholar Ronny Gabbay who researched the exodus in the second half of the 1950s and interviewed senior Israeli 1948 veterans such as Yigal Alon and Moshe Dayan. In the late 1970s, however, this situation changed and veterans started disclosing the expulsions. Examples include the interviews Mordechai Maklef and Yitzhak Rabin gave to the scholar Michael Bar-Zohar for his 1978 book (‘Ben-Gurion’).\(^{35}\)

In summary, mostly since the late 1970s, the veterans started presenting the critical narrative in their memoirs, newspaper articles and interviews by scholars.


\(^{34}\) M. Carmel, ‘Paneya Hemeuvatim shel Milhemet Hashichur [The Twisted Face of the War of Independence]’, (Davar, 2.19.78). (Hebrew).

\(^{35}\) Nets-Zehngut, ‘Origins’.

This activity promoted peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in various *indirect socio-psychological ways*. These were parallel and sequential influences (though a chain of impacts).

1. *Directly reducing the extent of taboo regarding the critical narrative.* The presentation of the critical narrative by veterans contributed significantly to lessening the taboo in Israel surrounding this narrative. After all, they experienced the 1948 exodus directly and therefore were to various degrees authorities on the subject.  

   A major example of this role that veterans’ narratives have played can be seen in the impact of Rabin’s memoir. This was the first time that the 1948 expulsions had penetrated into the public sphere so significantly -- all the more so since such a major figure was involved. As aforementioned Uri Avnery, peace activist and journalist, said: ‘No doubt that Rabin broke a taboo which existed all the time [regarding not mentioning the 1948 expulsions]’. Thus, since the late 1970s, war veterans, journalists, and scholars, among others, felt freer to publicly mention the 1948 expulsions. This process gained momentum as more and more veterans, some of whom were senior officers in 1948, joined in with presentations of the expulsions. Further examples include the aforementioned Moshe Carmel, who discussed expulsions in a 1989 memoir, Shmuel (Mula) Cohen (commander of the Iftach Brigade in 1948), who discussed expulsions in 1989 and 2000 memoirs, and Nahum Golan (commander of the Golany Brigade at that time), who did so in a 1989 memoir.

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37 Interview with Uri Avnery, 2008, p. 2 – cited in: Nets-Zehngut, ‘Major Events’ – where additional support is given to this assertion.

38 Nets-Zehngut, ‘Israeli 1948 War Veterans’.
2. Providing evidence for the expulsions. The discussions of the expulsions by veterans were used by others to prove that expulsions took place in 1948. For example, Rabin’s censored section was often mentioned in newspaper articles, scholarly studies and war veterans’ memoirs as proof of this expulsion, contradicting the Zionist narrative of willing flight in 1948; and this is true also regarding other memoirs. Thus, the veterans contributed indirectly to the reduction of the taboo regarding the critical narrative.

These two influences therefore contributed to the abovementioned transformation of the Israeli approach to the exodus -- on the official, popular and diplomatic levels.

On the official level, as we saw, as of the early 2000s, the Israeli official memory of the exodus became to a certain extent a critical one. Two state institutions started presenting the 1948 expulsions during that period: the Ministry of Education, since 2000, and the Israeli National Archive in 2005.

On the popular level, the Zionist narrative of the exodus reduced its grasp on the Israeli popular memory. A 2008 public opinion survey conducted among a representative sample of Israelis found that only 41 percent of them held the Zionist narrative, while 39 percent ascribed to the critical narrative, and 8 percent to the Palestinian one (12 percent did not reply). That is, 47 percent of Israelis believed that some or all of the Palestinians were expelled in 1948 (more than the 41 percent who maintained the Zionist narrative claiming that no expulsions took place). This state of affairs represented a major shift in Israeli popular memory of the exodus, which surely was much more Zionist-oriented in the first decades after 1948. Consequently, popular memory influences the politics regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, the survey

39 Nets-Zehngut, ‘Israeli 1948 War Veterans’.
research above found also that people who held an inclusive critical narrative of the conflict\textsuperscript{40} (pertaining to 24 of its major events) were more inclined to choose dovish parties in the Israeli parliament elections. They were also less inclined to have negative feelings towards Palestinians (hatred, fear, rage and de-legitimization) and were more supportive of signing peace agreements with them -- compared to people holding an inclusive Zionist narrative of the conflict.\textsuperscript{41}

And as for the diplomatic level – the critical narrative has had an impact here too, through its influence on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. For decades after the 1948 War, Israel refused to acknowledge the 1948 tragedy of the Palestinians and accept any political responsibility for the exodus. In contrast, the 2000 Camp David and the 2001 Taba Israeli-Palestinian peace summits witnessed a change. During that time, the critical narrative of the exodus was so prevalent in Israel that it was hard for Israeli negotiators to ignore it, as they had in the past. Therefore, in the summits they expressed a basic willingness to publicly acknowledge Palestine’s 1948 tragedy and indirectly and implicitly Israel's partial responsibility for it. This promoted prospects for peace in the international political arena.\textsuperscript{42}

Due to the centrality of the 1948 exodus in Israel, it seems reasonable to assume that the abovementioned positive transformation of its memory contributed to similar positive changes in

\textsuperscript{40} That is, a narrative that unrealistically portrays the Israelis in a positive light and the Palestinians negatively.


the Israeli memory of other events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well. That is, if the memory of the most important event in the conflict was transformed, that change probably destabilized the belief some Israelis had in Zionist narratives regarding other events in the conflict too. This assumption is based on research that found that the content of memories of people on various topics is organized in a manner that provides coherence to their meaning in order to prevent dissonance. When this coherence is destabilized, a new equilibrium needs to be reached.\textsuperscript{43}

To summarize the contribution of the veterans’ activity to peace – this chapter does not argue that this activity led to the resolution of this yet unresolved conflict. It does argue, though, that such activity contributed in the aforementioned indirect ways to peace. Reaching peace depends on many factors, and such socio-psychological contributions of the veterans are only some of them. However, even partial positive changes in the socio-psychological realm are important.

7. DISCUSSION
Various aspects of TJ should be addressed following the above description.

1. Transitional justice and ongoing conflicts. TJ is typically discussed in the literature as being implemented in resolved conflicts.\textsuperscript{44} However, some recent research began treating it as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} W. Hirst, and I. A. Fineberg, ‘Psychological perspectives on collective memory and national identity: The Belgian case,’ \textit{Memory Studies} (2011) 5, 86-95.
\end{itemize}
ongoing conflicts as well, this line of research is still significantly undeveloped compared to research on TJ’s use in resolved conflicts. The activity of the 1948 veterans discussed above supports the latter line of research. This activity took place, and contributed to peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, before it was resolved. Therefore, it is suggested that the above activity of the veterans is one of the TJ mechanisms in addressing the history of conflicts.

Implementing TJ in ongoing conflicts is especially important by comparison with implementing it in resolved conflicts, for two main reasons. First, usage of TJ in ongoing conflicts can promote their resolution. Such usage can, for example, reduce negative stereotypes and prejudice, increase trust and empathy towards the rival, and enhance critical reflection on one’s in-group behaviour. Such changes might consequently lead the in-group towards a greater willingness to sign a peace agreement. Second, earlier usage of TJ brings earlier healing to the suffering parties, even before the conflicts are resolved.

2. The causes of the veterans’ behaviour. How can we explain the behaviour of the veterans, who, until the late 1970s refrained almost entirely from discussing the expulsions -- and


thereafter, did so to a significant extent? In order to address this question I should divide the 1949-2004 period into two sub-periods: 1949 to the late-1970s, and from then to 2004.\textsuperscript{47}

During the \textit{first} sub-period, Israel faced great difficulties. Externally, the severe security threat to Israel's existence did not end when the 1948 War ended. Israel, while only gradually building its military power, dealt with numerous incidents along its borders: the 1956 Sinai War, the 1967 Six Day War, the late 1960s War of Attrition, and the 1973 Yom Kippur War. In addition, the Arabs/Palestinians conducted an international diplomatic campaign against Israel, demanding the return of the Palestinian refugees to their 1948 localities. This induced a strong taboo surrounding the critical narrative of the exodus. Internally, Israel had coped since its foundation with massive waves of Jewish immigrants from numerous countries. This immigration, due to security concerns and natural difficulties faced by a new state, caused severe economic and social difficulties in Israel. Moreover, the media was largely controlled by state or political parties – the radio and the television (from the late 1960s) completely, and to a great degree where the main newspapers were concerned. This prevented dissemination of critical ideas and information. Furthermore, the ‘Mapai’ political party and its successor ‘Ma'arach’, which were in power from 1948 until 1977, were strongly supported by the Israeli societal elite (e.g., scholars, journalists and authors). This prevented the elite from being particularly critical of the Zionist inclusive narrative and ideology supported by these parties. All of the above, along with the socialistic background of the 1948 generation of Israeli conservative elite and the traditional background of most of the immigrants, made Israeli society highly collectivist, patriotic and conformist – that is, strongly supportive of the Zionist ideology. These characteristics by and large also explain the Zionist nature of the state and societal publications.

regarding the exodus, described above, during this time. At the same time, these publications also supported the war veterans' Zionist inclination.

In this context, until the Six Day War, the Palestinians had far from a central presence in Israel. As of 1948, the Israelis had no contact with the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (the ‘territories) and little contact with those living in Israel under a severe and isolating military regime. They were also perceived by Israelis as part of a whole Arab nation, and not as a distinct nation. Due to the lifting of the military regime in 1966 and the seizure of the territories in 1967, the centrality of the Palestinians started to increase, especially in the 1970s. The Israelis had more contact with the Israeli-Palestinians, and started interacting with the Palestinians in the territories. Public debate also took place in Israel with regard to the destiny of the territories. Simultaneously, the Palestinians started conducting terror attacks against Israel.

During the second sub-period many things changed. Externally, Israel gained more confidence in its capability to protect itself militarily. The 1979 Egypt-Israel peace agreement decreased the security threat, as did the Palestinian-Israeli 1990s peace process and the 1994 Jordan-Israel peace agreement. Thus, during most of the second sub-period – except for the two Palestinian uprisings (Intifadas) erupting in 1987 and 2000 – the conflict was perceived by Israelis as less threatening. In addition, starting in the late 1970s, the extent and impact of the Arab/Palestinian diplomatic campaign significantly decreased, leading to a weakening of the taboo regarding the critical narrative. Internally, Israel very much improved its economic situation, and the media changed dramatically – private-commercial newspapers took over the previously public-political ones and numerous private radio and TV stations were established starting in the 1990s. Moreover, in 1977 the ‘Ma'arach’ ruling party was replaced by the ‘Likud’ party. This caused a rift between the state institutions and the societal elite, making the latter more critical. The passing of time also had various impacts. For example, a generational turnover
took place, in which the 1948 generation gradually gave way within various institutions to a younger and more critical generation and archival critical documents were declassified, allowing scholars to publish critical studies based on them.\textsuperscript{48} In addition, Americanization (and later globalization) processes occurred, promoting individualism, human rights, pluralism, political tolerance, and critical thinking. As an outcome of all of these processes, Israeli society in the second sub-period was more individualistic, open and critical. This state of affairs encouraged societal institutions to produce, as of the late 1970s, mostly critical publications regarding the exodus, as described above. At the same time, these publications also influenced the war veterans, although this time in support of the \textit{critical} inclination among them.

All of the \textit{empirical} causes of that influenced the veterans’ behaviour described above can be conceptualized as the following \textit{theoretical} factors in the veterans’ reversal on the question of expulsions: the state of the conflict, international status, characteristics of the society, characteristics of the media, the party in power, and the extent of centrality.

3. \textit{Informal activity that is not motivated by justice/peace considerations.} The critical activity of the veterans described above since the late 1970s has two characteristics that should be addressed.\textsuperscript{49}

First, it was \textit{informal}, that is, conducted by individuals on their own personal initiative, and not part of some larger projects conducted by societal or state institutions.

\textsuperscript{48} For a discussion of 15 types of impact of the passing of time on the collective memory of conflicts see: Nets-Zehngut, ‘The Passing of Time’.

Second, for the most part, this activity was *not conducted with the intention to promote peace* (by transforming the Israeli memory of the exodus). The veterans simply wanted to tell the stories of their lives in their memoirs, or to share via the newspapers their opinions/experiences about the exodus. This observation finds support in the research about *Passive Reconciliation*. The current dominant research about reconciliation views it as a process that consists of specific actions coordinated by the involved parties *with the purpose of advancing their reconciliation* (e.g., expressing apologies, offering reparations, and promoting cultural exchanges). Such a process has an *active* aspect, since the parties to the conflict *actively* seek reconciliation through this process.  

It has been recently suggested, however, that in practice another reconciliation process also takes place, a passive one. Through this process the relations between the parties are healed by a utilitarian-based collaboration on various levels (e.g., economic, environmental, and tourism). During this collaboration trust is restored, stereotypes improve, and prejudice is reduced. This process is termed ‘passive’ since within this framework, healing is reached or progresses passively, without the parties to the conflict actively seeking it.  

From this perspective, the above discussed non justice/peace motivated activity of


the veterans can be called *the non peace-motivated* one (the veterans did not aim to promote peace), while the typically discussed TJ activity that aim to promote justice and peace can be named *the peace-motivated* one.

These two characteristics of the veterans behaviour led to the conclusion that *TJ activity does not have to be formal activity conducted with the purpose of promoting justice and peace; it can also be informal and not justice/peace motivated*. This does not mean that the latter activity cannot in practice promote peace and reconciliation. It certainly can, as we saw in the case study discussed above.

4. *Comparing formal peace–motivated activity to informal non peace-motivated activity.* There is one major difference between these two kinds of activity: the kind typically discussed in TJ literature, the peace-motivated type, is much more difficult to conduct than the second kind described in this chapter, the non peace-motivated type of activity.

When a *state* institution is considering conducting peace–motivated activity, it has many constraints, especially in an ongoing conflict, since it represents the country. For example, admitting past wrongdoing could damage the country’s international image, its stand in the conflict, and might lead to negative political and financial consequences (e.g., the need to apologize or to pay reparations). This is why Israeli state institutions did not start to present the critical narrative regarding the exodus until 2000; even then, only some of them did so.\(^{52}\) A *societal* institution (e.g., a research centre or an NGO) conducting peace–motivated activity has fewer constraints than a state one, but it still faces more obstacles than those faced by people conducting informal non peace-motivated activity. Institutions may need to be created in order to conduct peace-motivated activity; and even if this happened, however, such institutions would still have to recruit the people and financial resources needed to act, and would therefore not be

\(^{52}\) As described in the background regarding Israel and its memory of 1948.
completely independent. Moreover, such institutions conducting formal peace-motivated activity might attract more restraining measures and sanctions, compared to those implemented against people conducting informal non peace-motivated activities. Since they would be peace-motivated, their maverick activities, especially in an ongoing conflict, could be perceived as intentionally undermining the status of the country and they might be even regarded as traitorous. This was the fate, for example, of the Israeli leftish organization ‘Matspen,’ that began operating in the early 1960s and criticized Israel’s conduct during the conflict, including its representation of its history. Its members were reproached, bitten, investigated by the police, cursed, taken out of their collective localities (Kibbutz); they endured severe disputes with family members, and were largely treated as traitors.53

In contrast, for the reverse reasons, an informal non peace-motivated activity would face many fewer obstacles. People conducting such activity do not have to form some entity or recruit resources, would not be affiliated with any institution, and would attract fewer restraining measures and sanctions. Others might think that, yes, these people might have acted improperly by presenting counter-critical narratives of the history of the conflict, but it was done with no ‘bad intentions’.

5. Relations between formal peace–motivated activity and informal non peace-motivated activity. The emphasis in this chapter on informal non peace-motivated activity is not meant to

suggest that formal peace-motivated activity, as typically discussed in the TJ literature, is not extremely important – it certainly is. Such activity can be conducted on a broad scale, and has significant impact when performed by state institutions, since they represent the country. The discussion here about informal non peace-motivated activities is simply meant to shed light on activities taking place in the context of TJ of conflicts, other than those discussed in the literature.

As such, this chapter advocates for a more holistic approach to TJ as it relates to addressing the history of conflicts. TJ is composed of both types of activity -- formal peace–motivated and informal non peace-motivated – which are interrelated in various ways. On a timeline, typically, the informal type will be conducted earlier than the other, due to the above mentioned obstacles that the formal type might encounter. This is what happened, as described above, in the case of the 1948 war veterans and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If non peace-motivated activity is successful to some degree, it can help pave the way for peace–motivated activity. Thereafter, both types of activities could be conducted parallel, reinforcing each other.

6. Other conductors of non peace-motivated TJ activities. Such activities, whether they are formal or informal, can be conducted by people in a variety of fields -- for instance, by artists (e.g., in the form of films, theatre and paintings), teachers and journalists. It is thus suggested that research be conducted on non peace-motivated activities of such people – in addition to more research on war veterans – from the perspective developed in this chapter. This will allow for elaboration on this perspective and making it richer.

However, non peace-motivated activity that is being conducted by direct-experience people (e.g., war veterans) has special significance in promoting peace and justice compared to such activity conducted by others. The autobiographical memory of these people is one of the two main sources about the past, in addition to documents. Therefore, they hold the ‘truth’ (or more of the truth) about past events in conflicts, events that typically are presented in a biased
and distorted way. As such, by exposing in public their autobiographical memory of the conflict they have the possibility to transform the collective memory of their people into a less biased one. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian case, as we saw, this is what happened in Israel: the 1948 veterans promoted such transformation of the Israeli memory of the exodus. They exposed the fact that expulsions did take place in 1948.

This situation seems to carry prospects of being similar on the Palestinian side. Studies have found that the Palestinian autobiographical memory of the exodus – as it is held by the 1948 Palestinian refugees themselves – is not as expulsion oriented as their official memory (which explains the exodus entirely by expulsion). In fact, according to the refugees, only a small part of the exodus was caused by expulsions.\footnote{R. Nets-Zehngut, ‘Palestinian Autobiographical Memory regarding the 1948 Palestinian Exodus’, \textit{Political Psychology}, (2011) 32 (2), 271-295; A. Yahya. \textit{The Palestinian Refugees – 1948-1998, an Oral History}. (Ramallah: Pace – Palestinian Association for Cultural Exchange, 1999).} Thus, it is possible that the autobiographical memory of the refugees will contribute to the transformation of the Palestinian official memory into one that is less expulsion oriented.

In conclusion, this chapter contributes to the literature by suggesting the existence of an informal and non peace-motivated TJ mechanism in addressing the history of conflicts. Empirically, it explores this mechanism as it has been used by Israeli 1948 war veterans regarding the 1948 Palestinian exodus. Theoretically, the chapter discusses the significance of implementing this mechanism in ongoing conflicts, as well as the reasons for its emergence. It goes on to compare the informal non peace-motivated use of the mechanism to formal peace-motivated activities, while discussing how the two types are related. It sheds light on various users of this mechanism -- but highlights the significance of direct-experience people who implement it.