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# Leadership and peacemaking: Yitzhak Rabin and the Oslo Accords



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## ABSTRACT

Leaders guiding their groups through a peace process following a difficult conflict must address the unique challenges created by this process. This article describes the duality characterizing peace processes and offers an original conceptualization of the socio-psychological tasks leaders fulfill in this context, addressing security and control needs, changing collective beliefs and emotions, and mobilizing the group while simultaneously coping with social polarization. This paper reports on a case study of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's leadership during the Oslo Accords through his public speeches designed to mobilize his group's support. A content analysis of speeches following different types of events (positive, negative or neutral) and targeting different audiences (Israeli and international) highlights three major themes emerging from his rhetoric, which correlate to his tasks as a leader in peacemaking. The findings describe how Rabin coped with the challenges that arose from the complex peace process, while fulfilling the first two of his tasks and mobilizing his group, but not dealing with the deep social polarization that existed within Israeli society at that time. The triangular interaction between leader, society and context are discussed with regard to their impact on peace processes. Conclusions are drawn about the opportunities and setbacks of the Oslo Accords, considering Rabin's contribution to peacemaking.

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## 1. Introduction

The Oslo Accords, beginning in September 1993, constituted a dramatic landmark in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is considered a prototypical protracted ethno-national conflict, resisting all past efforts to resolve it and seemingly destined never to end (Crocker, Hampson, & Aall, 2005). After decades of bitter rivalry and violent clashes, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), for the first time engaged in direct and ongoing negotiations that led to mutual recognition and several interim agreements. Following secret negotiations, both sides turned from viewing the other as an illegitimate and vicious enemy to being partners in dialogue and in implementing accords in the civil and security spheres.

The engagement of leaders in a constructive political process with concrete outcomes such as signing and implementing interim agreements is one crucial component of peacemaking. But no less important is the need to overcome the shared beliefs, emotions and narratives regarding the conflict and the societies involved, that constitute psychological barriers

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inhibiting progress towards peace (Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011; Maoz & McCauley, 2008, 2009; Rosler et al., in press; Wohl, Branscombe, & Reysen, 2010).

Although political leaders could be considered the most influential social agents with regard to ethno-national conflicts, especially due to growing dynamics of personalized politics (Balmas & Sheaffer, 2013), the growing body of research exploring the psychological barriers that inhibit conflict resolution focuses primarily on society and its members (cf. Arrow, Mnookin, Ross, Tversky, & Wilson, 1995; Halperin, 2011; Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011; Maoz, Ward, Katz, & Ross, 2002). Moreover, leaders guiding their groups through the tortuous path of a peace process must also mobilize group members by addressing the unique challenges that this process creates, while preparing them for the changes that peace will bring.

In order to understand the socio-psychological challenges that intractable conflicts and their resolution create, one must consider their defining characteristics. In the case of severe inter-group conflicts, the nature of these features – such as ongoing violence, totality and protractedness (Bar-Tal, 2013; Kreisberg, 1998) – imply that they inflict highly influential and negative consequences on involved individuals and collectives. While scholars from diverse disciplines have dealt with the challenges confronting groups engaged in ethno-national conflicts and reconciliation processes (cf. Bar-Tal, 2013; Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, & Niens, 2006; Kelman, 1999; Lederach, 1997; Volkan, 2001), only a few have, in the last decade or so, started to examine this issue within the context of peace processes (cf. Brewer, 2010; Darby & Mac Ginty, 2008; Tonge, 2014). This stage is crucial in the transition from intractable conflict to peace, with a successful peace process paving the way for positive inter-group relations and the creation of a culture of peace. Although leaders play a critical role in this process, very few studies have examined their part and their influence over it (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1997; Gormley-Heenan, 2007; Hermann & Gerard, 2009).

In order to fill this gap, our paper examines the tasks that leaders must fulfill to successfully navigate their society in the transition from conflict to peace. First we offer an examination of the psycho-social characteristics of peace processes, laying the foundation for the original conceptual framework we suggest for the psycho-social tasks that leaders fulfill in peace processes, which are based on the challenges created by this context. Then, we briefly describe the context of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process at the first half of the 1990s, which, together with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's leadership during that time, constitute our case study. Next, we present the method and findings of the empirical study we conducted in order to examine how Rabin addressed these challenges in public speeches designed to mobilize his group's support. Finally, we discuss the paper's contribution to the fields of peace studies and leadership, as well as presenting possible insights into the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

### 1.1. *The duality of peace processes*

Peace processes are fragile stages in the transition from intense inter-group conflict to peace. They are essentially dual in nature, retaining many of the components characteristic of conflict, even as real and perceptual processes of change begin to develop (Rosler, 2016). Alongside gradual contextual changes stemming from negotiation and dialogue—such as mid-term agreements or transitional arrangements (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1997; De Dreu, 2010; Kriesberg & Dayton, 2012)—the level of institutionalized violence begins to subside. As both sides start to invest both materially and psychologically in the peace process, joint inter-cultural and economic projects are initiated (Fitzduff, 2002). A new perception of the conflict as being amenable to resolution by peaceful means emerges and becomes institutionalized amongst growing sectors of society (Bar-Tal, Landman, Magal, & Rosler, 2009), which begin to acknowledge that accepting former antagonists as legitimate partners for peace does not pose a threat to one's existence. Increasingly, segments of society begin to regard the socio-political goals imposed by the conflict as no longer sacred and to pursue new objectives that recognize the importance of mutual contact and cooperation with the other side (Bar-Tal, 2013).

At the same time, spoilers on both sides set themselves in opposition to the process (Stedman, 1997), some adopting peaceful protest and persuasion, others using threats, coercion, and violence. Both the deep-rooted psychological infrastructure (Bar-Tal, 2013) and the still-present evidence of violence (Höglund, 2008) reinforce conflict-oriented beliefs and emotions, which ensure that the conflict remains a central element of social life. The long, turbulent history of conflict makes the potential collapse of the peace process very tangible. Hence, decision-makers are likely to continue channeling resources toward maintaining security and defense, as well as preserving the psychological infrastructure of the conflict (Rosler, 2016).

This duality characterizing the peace process creates difficult challenges for the society embarking on the road to change. During the conflict, society members have confronted a dichotomous context that has become inherent in the identity of the group. Bar-Tal (2013) suggests three basic challenges that societies must address in order to adapt to this difficult situation: satisfying deprived needs, coping with stress and withstanding the enemy. In this context, the group's positive collective image, its goals and their total justification are clear. On the other hand, the negative collective image of the enemy and his malicious aims, as well as the win-lose nature of the struggle are taken for granted. The psychological repertoire of conflict (see elaboration in Bar-Tal, 2013), which includes societal beliefs and emotions that support and justify the continuation of the conflict while providing meaning to the situation, help society to cope with it (Sharvit, 2014). Various components of the repertoire of conflict have been studied in the past, examining, among others, cultural products (Benziman, 2011; Nasie & Bar-Tal, 2012), educational materials (Bar-Tal, 1998), political discourse (Rosler, 2013), and public attitudes (Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Halperin, & Zafra, 2012; Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2011). However, leader's rhetoric as well as changes in the repertoire during times of transition in the context of the conflict have received less empirical attention.

While several scholars have examined the political challenges that peace processes create (cf. Darby & Mac Ginty, 2008; Tonge, 2014), the social and psychological aspects of these processes have been overlooked. Following the characterizing features of peace processes mentioned above, we will hence address the three socio-psychological challenges that societies engaged in a peace process are required to meet: dealing with threats to basic psychological needs for security and control; adapting the collective identity; and creating mobilization for the process while coping with social polarization. Since leaders speak for their society in accord with its collective interests and needs (Burns, 1978; Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011), these challenges give rise to the three basic tasks we propose in the next section that leaders must fulfill in order to guide and mobilize their respective societies. In comparison to the intractable conflict, the peace process creates an ambiguous context, in which the clear in-group versus out-group distinctions are undermined, the goals and motivations of the society undergo significant changes, and reality becomes increasingly unpredictable. Furthermore, the psychological repertoire of conflict which includes societal beliefs and emotions that support and justify the continuation of the conflict becomes less relevant and useful to cope with the new situation, and its basic premises regarding the other side, one's own group and the nature of the conflict are challenged (Rosler, 2016). This transition process intensifies resistance to change both psychologically and politically (Marcus, 2014). Therefore, these challenges in the peace process create the need for a charismatic leader, capable of generating the sense of a stable and predictable social environment, ensuring security and control, and providing common understanding and justification for the new path.

### 1.2. Leadership tasks in peace processes

Although leaders are required to make tough decisions on controversial issues, this is only one aspect of their tasks in the peace process. In addition to determining the course of action taken by their group (Elcock, 2001; Gormley-Heenan, 2007; Kellerman, 1986; Rhodes & 't Hart, 2014), providing it with a rationale and an epistemic basis, and shaping its identity (Haslam et al., 2011; Hogg, 2007), leaders must be attentive to group members' psychological needs, seek to realize them and provide their followers with new coping mechanisms (Burns, 1978; Popper, 2005). Doing so legitimizes their leadership and the policies they espouse while mobilizing their group for collective action. Therefore, in order to determine the basic socio-psychological tasks that leaders must fulfill in the context of a peace process, one must look at the challenges that society members have to confront. We would like to suggest that, from a socio-psychological perspective, these challenges engender three basic tasks that a leader is required to fulfill in the context of a peace process.

First, the leader has to respond to the challenge of pressing psychological needs for security and control engendered by the culture of conflict and by the peace process reality (Bar-Tal, 2013). These needs are directly threatened by the uncertainty inherent in the process of change (Marcus, 2014), the risks involved in breaking the circle of violence (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1997), and the actions taken by spoilers (Stedman, 1997). Because resources and power are inevitably ceded in seeking a settlement whose outcome is far from assured, stress is created amongst society members, and the leader is expected to help them cope. The psychological needs for security and control clearly surfaced during the negotiations between the ANC and the government of South Africa that took place during the first half of the 1990s; during the negotiations between the French government and the FLN at Évian-les-Bains (in 1961–2); and during the negotiations between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In the first two instances, bold leaders, such as Mandela and De Gaulle addressed these challenges successfully (Gaffney, 2010; Glad & Blanton, 1997).

Second, it is necessary for the leader to assist society members in the challenge of adapting their collective beliefs and emotions to the new situation. As suggested earlier, the delegitimizing beliefs about the other side, coupled with negative inter-group emotions such as anger and hatred become no longer functional to address the changing reality in which the detested enemy turns into a partner in the pursuit of peace. The goals of the group previously perceived as existential and in zero-sum competition with those of the rival are now subject to negotiation and compromise. In a wider sense, the collective identity of the group, having largely been dictated by the conflict, now must be modified (Bar-Tal, 2013). Hence, peacemaking requires that the leader construct a new shared understanding of reality, and help the public adapt their societal beliefs, collective emotions, and values accordingly. David Trimble and Gerry Adam, for example, who led opposing communities in Northern Ireland during the 1990s fruitful peace process, promoted gradual change in their group's goals and their opponent's image (Rosler, 2016).

Third, the leader is required to create mobilization for the process while coping with growing social polarization. Peace poses a threat to the longstanding conflict ideology and its identity-related components. Thus, gaining group support and public legitimacy for the process and for the peace policy is a key factor in achieving conflict resolution (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1997; Fisher, Kelman, & Nan, 2013). Furthermore, coping with the duality that a peace process creates, while justifying and maintaining the dramatic political and perceptual changes taking place require ongoing social mobilization (cf. Gidron, Katz, & Hasenfeld, 2002; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001). These dramatic changes tend to further create growing social polarization between members who support the process, seeing its potential benefits, and those who oppose it, regarding it as a danger to society's vital interests or even treason in its goals and values (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1997; Stedman, 1997). If unattended, these drifts could escalate into intra-group clashes and create fragmentation of society. Both communities in Northern Ireland, for example, faced heated debates and schisms about whether to accept the partners to the negotiation process and its pivotal principles (Dixon, 2001; Farrington, 2006).

In order to cope with these three challenges and fulfill their basic tasks, leaders must identify personally with the norms and values of the group, frame policy in accordance with these, and appeal to their group with resonating messages that

also strengthen socio-national unity and solidarity (Haslam et al., 2011; Snow & Benford, 1988). The societal beliefs and emotions that society members shared during the decades of conflict and constituted their repertoire of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013) has helped in meeting the challenges that intractable conflict poses and has shaped the social identity of society members. Therefore, appealing to societal beliefs and emotions from that repertoire, while changing them to meet the current challenges, can optimally serve leaders in fulfilling their tasks in this complex context.

### 1.3. Duality and social challenges in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, 1993–1995

Following the historical breakthrough in Oslo, a sharp duality characterized the peace process between Israel and the PLO, especially during the years 1993–1995. On the basis of mutual agreements, the Israeli army redeployed its forces in the occupied territories, new national Palestinian institutions were created, gaining control over some territory in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and security and economic cooperation started to develop between the newly established Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel. But at the same time, Israel kept on building Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, and radical spoilers began employing extreme violence. Mainly through the use of suicide terrorism within Israeli cities, the radical Islamic opposition movements strived to sabotage the transfer of powers from Israel to the PA, to compromise the credibility of the interim agreements and to entirely halt the process (Kimmerling, 2008; Shikaki, 1999). Radical Israeli spoilers began protesting violently against the process, culminating in a deadly terrorist attack inside the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron in February 1994, and the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, 1995.

The Oslo Accords created and intensified major challenges to Israeli and Palestinian societies. On the Israeli side, the need for security and control was deprived following the violent actions taken by Palestinian radicals that led to an increase in Israeli fatalities compared to the years before the peace process had started (Arian, 1998).<sup>1</sup> In addition, societal beliefs delegitimizing the PLO were undermined following the shift in the stance of the Israeli government toward the PLO (Kimmerling, 2008). The process created stress among society members due to the uncertainty and risks that were integral in negotiating with an organization that until early 1993 was labeled as terrorist by Israeli law, as well as following the harsh dual reality of peacemaking alongside violence. The process intensely created a need for social mobilization in light of the narrow parliamentary majority of the Israeli government, and the deep polarization created within the Israeli public and elites between the supporters of the process and those who opposed it (cf. Bar-Siman-Tov, 1997; Grinberg, 2009; Hermann & Yuchtman-Yaar, 2002; Wolfsfeld, 1997).

To recap, our theoretical approach suggests that peace processes are characterized by duality which gives rise to specific challenges. Since the pivotal socio-psychological tasks of leaders involve addressing the basic challenges that confront their followers, we propose three major tasks that leaders must fulfill in this context: addressing deprived security and control needs, adapting collective beliefs and emotions, and mobilizing the group and coping with social polarization. One of the most powerful tools that leaders possess in order to fulfill their tasks is rhetoric—the art of persuasive speech (Aristotle, 1909; Condor, Tileagă, & Billig, 2013). In their speeches leaders should reflect their identification with their group's values and use them to address the dual reality, the cognitions and the emotions group members encounter while motivating acceptance of the new peace-oriented culture. Rabin thus had to address the serious political and psychological challenges that the peace process had aroused in Israeli society. Therefore, in order to examine how he accomplished these tasks, we conducted a content analysis of speeches he delivered during this period. We analyzed the content and meaning of the major rhetorical themes Rabin used in his speeches.

## 2. The current study

The present study examines how a leader rhetorically addressed the three principal socio-psychological tasks during a peace process, appealing to societal beliefs and collective emotions. In other words, we aim to investigate how a leader deals with the challenges that peacemaking presents to his society while advancing the process through his public speeches. Such an examination can deepen our understanding how leaders create social influence in peacemaking. In addition, it may contribute to the attempts to promote peace by describing the rhetorical approaches used by leaders determined to shift their societies away from intractable conflict towards settlement and reconciliation. We examined our research question in the case study of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin who led his society during the formative years of the Oslo Accords. We specifically examined how Rabin rhetorically addressed the tasks of fulfilling the security needs of his followers, changing their shared beliefs and emotions, and mobilizing Israelis for the peace process with the Palestinians while coping with social polarization that dominated Jewish-Israeli society at that time.

The Oslo Accords are a prime example of the rocky road and complex peace process that intractable conflicts go through in trying to reach a peaceful settlement (Tonge, 2014), enabling us to suggest insights for how leaders can address the challenges faced by their societies during the peace process. In addition, illuminating the challenges Rabin rhetorically addressed and those he overlooked during the peace process may have implications for understanding factors behind the successes and failures this unique opportunity brought to the troubled Middle East.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.btselem.org/statistics/first\\_intifada\\_tables](http://www.btselem.org/statistics/first_intifada_tables).

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Materials

In order to obtain all of Rabin's transcribed speeches from the research period—starting from the introduction of his new government on July 12, 1992 and up until his assassination on November 4, 1995—we conducted a search within the relevant archives,<sup>2</sup> resulting in 102 complete and relevant speeches. Following past studies (Klein & Licata, 2003; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996, 2001; Reicher, Hopkins, & Condor, 1997), we suspected that two major factors could affect the content of Rabin's rhetoric – major events in the conflict preceding the speech and the main target audience. As a result of the duality that existed in the context of the Oslo Accords, as well as the availability of a large sample of speeches addressed to different audiences, we divided Rabin's speeches into those delivered following a negative security event in the conflict such as a suicide bombing attack, a positive political event such as the signing of an interim agreement, or an event of another nature such as the construction of a new Israeli government; and to speeches targeted mostly for his own group, Israeli society, and to those delivered and aimed largely at international audience. Subsequently, we sampled 20 speeches using a stratified sampling technique to ensure the heterogeneity of the sample (see Appendix A for details of each speech).

#### 3.2. Analytic framework

The analytic process was organized to reveal the rhetorical themes employed by Rabin to address his threefold task in the peace process as described above. Leaders appeal to their group's common psychological repertoire (Bar-Tal, 2013) in order to reflect identification and create change, since this repertoire basically addresses the social challenges raised by the conflict.

Therefore, we used a directed approach to content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) that enables us to conceptually extend an existing framework, while utilizing a deductive category application (Mayring, 2000).

Since the repertoire of conflict relates to societal beliefs and emotions relevant to the context of an intractable conflict – for example, de-legitimization of the rival – we identified a-priori coding categories based on the content of a shared psychological repertoire (Bar-Tal, 2013) relevant to the three abovementioned challenges raised by a peace process, and developed “neutral” operational definitions– for example, out-group image. The coding scheme for analyzing the content of the speeches thus included eight categories: *political goals*, *out-group image*, *in-group image*, *security*, *victimhood*, *peace*, *fear*, and *anger* (see Appendix B for definitions). Furthermore, each coding category was divided into two subcategories, one referring to conflict-based meaning and the second referring to change and peace (see Appendix B). For example, the category *victimhood* was divided into the subcategories of *exclusive in-group victimhood* and *mutual victimhood*, while the category of *fear* was divided into the subcategories of *fear of the out-group* and *fear of maintaining the conflict*. A text that could not be coded into these predetermined categories was coded with another label that captured its essence. This process resulted in three further coding categories: *relations with the out-group* and *hope* that were further divided into two subcategories, and *dual contents* (see Appendix B for definitions).

The analytical procedure was composed of several steps. First, all the speeches were carefully reviewed, while all text that appeared to describe one or more of the coding categories and subcategories was highlighted and labeled with the appropriate one(s). In many cases, each highlighted part of the text described more than one coding category or subcategory. While coding each highlighted part of the text, the entire speech was also treated as a single segment in order to enable a holistic analysis of meaning according to context and circumstances (Berg & Lune, 2012; Billig, 1988; Krippendorff, 2012; Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996). Next, all highlighted text in a speech was rigorously searched and reviewed in order to identify themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

All the speeches were coded by the researcher (Tappan, 1997), and in about 20% of the text, where categorization was ambiguous, an additional reader was asked to analyze it.<sup>3</sup> In most cases there was agreement between the evaluators. In the few cases of disagreement, the readers discussed the matter until reaching a consensus.

The results of the analysis describe the main themes that Rabin used, while providing specific examples from the speeches and comparing between speeches following different types of events in the conflict and various target audiences.

### 4. Results

The results of the study are presented according to the three main themes that emerged through conceptual ordering of the pre-determined categories found in Rabin's speeches: *security and control*, *gradual change in beliefs and emotions*, and *duality*.

<sup>2</sup> The archives include the archive of the Israeli Defense Ministry and Israeli Army, the Israeli State Archive, the Israeli Labor Party archive, the Yitzhak Rabin Center archive, the Israeli Parliament archive on the internet (<http://www.knesset.gov.il/Divrey/QForm.asp>), the archive of speeches on the internet of the Israeli Foreign Ministry (<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA>), and the book of Rabin's speeches (1995).

<sup>3</sup> The additional analyzer is a Ph.D. researcher who is proficient in the theoretical model of the socio-psychological repertoire and in qualitative methodology.

**Table 1**  
Themes and their respective coding categories in Rabin's speeches.

Themes and their content	Coding categories and subcategories
1. <i>Security and control</i> : Acknowledging the threat and violence from radical spoilers, emphasizing own military capabilities and agreed-upon security measures, and stressing the calculated risks and the reversibility of the interim agreements.	Fear of the out-group
2. <i>Gradual change of beliefs and emotions</i> : Referring to the political aims of Israel, legitimization of the PLO, and to the value of peace as feasible, central and specific.	Security by force Security through peace and change Change in the in-group's goals
3. <i>Duality</i> : Expressing mixed feelings toward the process and the PLO, cherishing common Jewish-Israeli values, and committing to fighting terrorism alongside negotiating peace.	Conflict in-group's goals Legitimation and differentiation of out-group Gradual construction of relations with out-group Realistic peace through negotiation Dual contents
	Hope Anger Exclusive victimhood Positive in-group image in peace

#### 4.1. *Security and control*

Looking at the first theme of *security and control* that runs through Rabin's speeches, we can suggest that it clearly fulfills the first task of a leader in the context of a peace process – i.e., assisting his society to cope with deprived needs for security and control. Rabin rhetorically addressed this task by emphasizing Israel's military capabilities and determination to cope with the threats to its security, together with the mechanisms and nature of the interim agreements leaving control in its hands (see Table 1).

Rabin acknowledged the threats and the violence against Israel and its citizens by the radical spoilers aiming to sabotage the peace process by alluding to *fear of the out-group*. At the same time, he emphasized Israel's determination to fight back and overcome any threat to the peace process, while also reframing the nature of the threat, by no longer referring to the Palestinians and to the radical organizations as an existential danger. Instead, he mentioned these organizations as a barrier that had to be overcome on the way to achieving peace. In his address to the Israeli parliament after the signing of the interim agreement in Washington, Rabin said:

We re-emphasize that the Palestinians were not in the past and are not today, a threat to the existence of the State of Israel. Despite this, the primary obstacle today to the implementation of the peace process between us and the Palestinians, is the murderous terrorism of the radical Islamic terrorist organizations, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which are joined by the rejectionist organizations. . . We are taking the necessary and permissible steps, in accordance with Israeli law, in order to fight it. This terrorism will not achieve its political goal. (October 5, 1995)

Rabin expressed in his speeches a combination of both maintaining societal beliefs from the time of the conflict together with new peace-oriented ones. On the one hand, he presented Israel's high military capabilities and its ability to subdue those who threaten it (coded *security by force*). On the other hand, Rabin spelled out in great detail the security rationale and measures that were taken in the interim agreements, which contributed to safeguarding his group's security (coded *security through peace and change*), as, for example, when he presented the Cairo Agreement to the Israeli parliament:

The Declaration of Principles determines that, during the interim period, the State of Israel will continue to bear responsibility for defense against external threats, for overall security of all Israelis. . . We will do this through various means: with inspection mechanisms along the borders and thoroughfares. . . by controlling the air and maritime spaces; with joint patrols; with the liaison and coordination apparatus, and with the redeployment of the IDF inside and near the Israeli communities. All this has been anchored in the Gaza-Jericho agreement. (May 11, 1994)

Interestingly, both subcategories of *fear of the out-group* and *security by force*, but not *security through peace and change*, were found to be more dominant in Rabin's speeches following a negative security event in the conflict.

Rabin referred in his speeches also to the calculated risks that Israel can take in the peace process with the Palestinians and to the reversible nature of the interim agreements. Rabin rhetorically stressed Israel's possibility to take calculated risks in the process from its position of power and its ability to manage these risks if necessary. Furthermore, Rabin reassured his followers' sense of control by presenting the interim agreements as temporal and reversible, leaving the options for the final status negotiations open, and addressing the possibility to roll the situation back if the process failed. These arguments were prevalent in his speeches to support the change he was leading, as can be seen in the following quote:

Alongside the great advantages, the anticipated peace – great risks for us are also hidden. Our eyes are not blurred from seeing the risks, and we will do everything necessary in order to reduce these to a minimum. At the same time, we believe that the risks are calculated and that they will not affect the security or existence of the State of Israel. In any event, the strength of the IDF – the best military in the world – stands at our disposal, if and when we should be tested, God forbid. (September 21, 1993)

Thus, during the Oslo Accords, Rabin related extensively in his speeches to the theme of *security and control*, specifying various strategies to achieve these aims in this complex context. This theme is connected to the second major theme found in the analysis of his speeches, that is, *gradual change in beliefs and emotions*, since both can be seen as necessary conditions to coping with the third theme of *duality*.

#### 4.2. Gradual change in beliefs and emotions

*Gradual change of beliefs and emotions* that emerged as a second theme following the analysis of Rabin's speeches corresponds well with his task of assisting society members to adapt their collective beliefs and emotions to the new reality that was unfolding. Thus, he initiated gradual change of his in-group goals, as well as a dramatic shift in the image of the formal rival by legitimizing the PLO and posing peace as a central and detailed societal belief (see Table 1).

The change in the construct of Israel's political goals unfolded slowly and gradually in his speeches during the period of three years that were analyzed. Rabin rhetorically presented this construct, balancing novelty and stability by proposing new goals through *change in the in-group's goals*, along with keeping traditionally shared goals intact by alluding to *conflict in-group's goals* to a lesser extent. For example, he promoted territorial compromises while continuing to object to withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders and emphasizing the status of greater Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital. Regarding shorter-term goals, he supported and justified the creation of the PA, but insisted that "no Israeli settlement would be uprooted" during the interim period. His reference to both sets of goals can be found in the following two quotes from the same speech:

After the Six-Day War, in June 1967, Jerusalem was unified and Israeli law was extended to united Jerusalem – the eternal capital of the State of Israel and the very heart of the Jewish people.

I will view with great satisfaction the exit of IDF troops from Gaza [City], Jabaliyah, Shatti, the Nusseirat and Bureij refugee camps, Deir al-Balah, Khan Yunis, Rafiah. There is nothing for them to do there, and no one has the right to risk their lives in order to be there. (May 11, 1994)

The dramatic political shift that the Oslo Accords brought about was mainly the recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people by Israel, and direct negotiation initiated with it. It was no less than a revolutionary perceptual change regarding an organization that Rabin and the vast majority of the Israeli public despised and detested, while meeting its representatives was considered a criminal offense up until several months before the process started. Justifying this shift of attitudes, in his speeches Rabin legitimized the PLO as a partner for peace which had transformed its positions and behavior toward Israel, while humanizing the Palestinians as having similar needs and aspirations to those of Israelis. However, in order to contain the difficult experiences of ongoing violent attacks by Palestinians, Rabin differentiated between the Islamic fundamentalist organizations who committed these attacks and the Palestinian people and its leadership who were yearning for peace. *Legitimation and differentiation of out-group and gradual construction of relations with out-group* exemplified this in Rabin's rhetoric, as can be seen in the following quotes from two of his speeches—the first delivered at the signing ceremony of the Declaration of Principles in Washington, and the second broadcasted in the Israeli media following a terrorist attack near Tel Aviv:

We who have fought against you, the Palestinians, we say to you today in a loud and a clear voice, "Enough of blood and tears. Enough! We have no desire for revenge. We harbor no hatred towards you. We, like you, are people – people who want to build a home, to plant a tree, to love, live side by side with you in dignity, in affinity, as human beings, as free men. (September 13, 1993)

I know that the way to the resolution of a conflict as complex as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not easy. There are enemies – murderers on the Palestinian side: Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the rejectionist fronts. But we also have Palestinian partners to reach a solution, something that we never had in the past. (July 24, 1995)

Another aspect of the gradual change that Rabin rhetorically led dealt with reconstructing the societal belief about peace. He turned peace from a theoretically aspired construct to a feasible possibility, as well as a central and detailed social value using extensively *realistic peace through negotiation* in his speeches. Rabin repeatedly elaborated on the content of the various agreements signed with the Palestinians thus demonstrating how peacemaking could be carried out in changing circumstances with the aim of achieving coexistence, permanent agreement, conflict resolution and reconciliation. He also emphasized the importance of peace for his group and the material advantages the accords carried for Israel. A prevalent example can be found in Rabin's speech at the Nobel Peace Prize awarding ceremony:

We are in the midst of building the peace. The architects and the engineers of this enterprise are engaged in their work even as we gather here tonight, building the peace layer by layer, brick by brick. . . the agreement that was signed

here, later on in Washington, later on in Cairo, that wrote a beginning of the solution to the longest and most difficult part of the Arab-Israeli conflict; the Palestinian-Israeli one. (December 10, 1994)

Interestingly, *realistic peace through negotiation* and *gradual construction of relations with out-group* were found more frequently in the speeches Rabin delivered in front of international audience and following positive political events. He could probably offer a clear perceptual change of the relations with the other side and of peace more easily in front of an audience that overwhelmingly supported the Oslo Accords. Positive political events, such as signing of mutual agreements or awarding of peace prize ceremonies created favorable conditions and enticing opportunities to solidify the desired and feasible change in both sets of beliefs.

The first two themes, relating to the constructs of security, control and change, appeared throughout Rabin's speeches alongside a third theme – *duality* – that reflected his awareness of the complex reality in which he operated.

#### 4.3. Duality

The third theme of *duality* partially fulfills the third task of a leader in the context of a peace process of mobilizing his group while coping with duality and social polarization. Rabin addressed the duality this context arouses by presenting and identifying with the mixed feelings toward the process and the negotiation partner. He also mobilized his group members to his peace policy by cherishing common values and resolutely committing to fight terrorism while framing progress in the peace process as the long term response to the difficulties and threats (see Table 1).

In his speeches acknowledging the duality that characterized the Oslo Accords, Rabin conveyed *dual contents* expressing ambivalence toward the process and the PLO. He expressed mixed feelings of hardship and pain inherent in the process of change in the conflict, while mentioning the opportunities that this process opened up. *Hope* was an important aspect of Rabin's efforts to mobilize the support of his group. In his hope-evoking messages, he related to the positive aspirations motivating the peace process—an end to violence and peaceful coexistence—along with their feasibility within a specific timetable. Furthermore, he mentioned ambivalent messages containing mistrust and enmity toward the PLO alluding to *anger* that originated from the history of conflict, along with the partnership and cooperation that had developed during the negotiations:

We cannot choose our neighbors or our enemies, not even the cruelest among them. We only have what there is. The PLO fought us, and we fought against them. Today, we are searching for a path to peace therewith. . . We had the power to reject, with revulsion, PLO offers – and to then be unwilling partners in the cycle with which we have been forced to live until now: war, terror and violence. But we have chosen another way, that which gives a chance, which gives hope. (September 21, 1993)

Interestingly, *hope* was observed less in his speeches to Israeli audiences than when speaking to international audiences. A possible explanation is that his presenting exaggerated levels of hope to Israelis who were still experiencing high levels of violence from radical spoilers could have depicted him as an unrealistic, detached leader.

Another rhetorical mean used by Rabin to help Israelis to cope with duality and to assist him in mobilizing legitimacy for the process, was emphasizing common values, such as sanctity of life, peace seeking, and caring for future generations, thus referring to *positive in-group image in peace*. These values, some of which originated in Jewish tradition, both morally justified Israel's willingness to make peace, and positively portrayed Israeli society. Aiming to further anchor these common values, Rabin used quotes from the Old Testament in several of his speeches:

It is a message which the Jewish people has carried for thousands of years, the message found in the Book of Books: "Therefore take good heed of yourselves" – or, in contemporary terms, the message of the sanctity of life. . . There is only one radical means for sanctifying human lives. The one radical solution is a real peace. (December 10, 1994)

A third core category related to the theme of duality that could be considered as a policy-related proposed action was Rabin's stated dual strategy of fighting terrorism alongside negotiating peace. Justifying this line of action, he differentiated between the spoilers in both societies, who were delegitimized in his speeches as "extremists", "murderers" and "lunatics", and the supporters of the peace process. He condemned the violence and repeatedly referred to Israeli casualties as *exclusive victims* of the spoilers of the peace process. In doing so, he related to the cause and costs of the ongoing violence, while mobilizing Israeli society for his two-fold goal in the peace process: achieving peace and conflict resolution, as well as fighting terrorism and achieving security. Speaking on Israeli Radio following a terrorist attack in Jerusalem, which killed five and wounded over a hundred, Rabin said:

The time has come to determine who among the Palestinians, are the murderers and who wish to find a political solution. . . This is a hard and painful day, but we are determined to fight Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorism and to continue building the peace with the Palestinians who wish for peace with us. (August 21, 1995)

*Duality* was hence another major theme that appeared through all of Rabin's speeches during the Oslo Accords. While acknowledging two major conditions to cope with the complex reality – expressing ambivalent feelings toward the process and the rival, and cherishing common in-group values – he also proposed his two-fold action strategy of fighting terrorism



alongside negotiating peace. Together with the first two, the three themes that run through Rabin's speeches represents his rhetorical effort to fulfill his role as a leader in a peace process.

## 5. Discussion

Looking back at the Oslo Accords that created an unprecedented opportunity to initiate change in the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict toward peace and reconciliation, it is important to examine the crucial stages for making peace that followed. Leaders assuming the initiative and mobilizing their societies for a peace process aimed at breaking the long cycle of conflict is a critical staging post on the road. However, as in other intractable conflicts, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process constituted a complex context (see Tonge, 2014), involving real and perceptual duality with elements of de-escalation and escalation intertwined. Israel's leader at the time, Yitzhak Rabin, was elected to the premiership on a platform of negotiation with the Palestinians, and was therefore expected to guide and assist his nation in the process of change. The current paper places the leadership role he played in the peace process, and the accompanying challenges for his group within an original theoretical frame.

Previous research in this field has largely focused on the difficulties created by an intractable inter-group conflict or reconciliation (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2013; Lederach, 1997) and has rarely explored the tasks of leaders in this context. We propose for the first time an elaborated conceptualization of the challenges that societies face in the crucial transitional context of a peace process, which serve as the basis to the socio-psychological tasks of leaders in this context. The duality that dominates this context calls for leaders who will help society cope with a diminished sense of security and control, gradually assist changing their group's common beliefs and emotions, and create social mobilization for peace. We suggest that, in order to fulfill these tasks, leaders use collective beliefs and emotions in their public speeches which provide them with an opportunity to directly convey their messages.

During the first years of the Oslo Accords, Rabin, along with Israeli society, encountered the challenging reality of growing cooperation with the former rival alongside violent opposition which undermined Israelis' sense of security and control, while shaking commonly held beliefs. Using a directed content analysis of speeches he delivered at the time, we have examined the three major themes of *security and control*, *gradual change of beliefs and emotions*, and *duality* that emerged in the analysis in order to investigate how they reflect most of his threefold task.

However, Rabin mostly refrained from rhetorically coping with the deepening social polarization, for example, by using unifying messages. Surprisingly, he made only minor reference to the resistance and opposition that existed within Israel to the Oslo Accords, originating from central elements in the Israeli political system, or to the extreme social polarization that existed at that time around the peace process. In some cases, he marginalized the opposition to his policy or negatively labeled its members as an obstacle to peace and security. In his last speech, moments before being murdered by a Jewish assassin who opposed the Oslo Accords, he ironically related to the unity that he hoped existed in Israel against violence and for peace:

I have always believed that the majority of the people want peace, are prepared to take risks for peace. And you here, by coming to this rally, along with the many who did not make it here, prove that the people truly want peace and oppose violence. (November 4, 1995)

Failing to address this part of his third task probably compromised his ability to cope with the spoilers within his own society, who grew stronger both in numbers and in their scope of resistance to the peace process.

Although Rabin rhetorically addressed most of his socio-psychological tasks that originated from the challenges created by the peace process with the Palestinians, the Israeli public was only partially supportive and mobilized for its goals. Opinion polls that were previously published from that period indicate mixed results regarding the sense of security felt by the public: While in December 1994, 47% felt that Israel's security situation had worsened due to the peace process,<sup>4</sup> following the signing of the Interim Agreement in Washington in September 1995, 49% thought that this agreement strengthened Israel's security (Arian, 1998). The percentage of Jewish-Israeli respondents ranking peace as the most important value dropped from 40% in June 1992 to 29% in January 1995 (Shamir & Shamir, 2000). Finally, while 60% supported the Declaration of Principles right after it was signed in September 1993 (Arian, 1995), only 37% supported the Interim Agreement in October 1995.<sup>5</sup>

The findings of our study taken together with public opinion polls from that period and the political developments that followed the Oslo Accords can possibly highlight the importance of three major factors for the success of a peace process. We suggest that successfully leading the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by Rabin, as well as potentially leading peace processes in other intractable conflicts, depended on a triangular interaction between three factors that were historically and empirically examined in the current study: the context and its characteristics, society and the challenges it faces, and leaders – their rhetoric and possibly other political actions. To the extent that the three factors are inclined towards a process of change in the conflict, the chances for realization and successful conclusion of the process will increase.

<sup>4</sup> The Peace Index Project, <http://www.peaceindex.org/defaultEng.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> See note 4.

However, the Oslo Accords, like other peace processes which aim to resolve difficult conflicts (see [Tonge, 2014](#)), did not satisfy these three supportive factors. Although Rabin contributed to the change process through his pragmatic belief system ([Aronoff, 2009](#)), his well-established security background and determination ([Auerbach & Greenbaum, 2000](#)), and his political and rhetorical resolution to advance the peace process, two major factors acting in concert sabotaged it: the social and political spoilers, and the context of the conflict. The salient oppositional factors acted politically and at times violently against Rabin and his peace policy, intensifying some aspects of the conflict on the ground, thus increasing the challenges that society faced and de-stabilizing its support for the process. Under these conditions, it is rare to find leaders who have succeeded in leading their nations in this direction despite the circumstances.

Our study suggests insights for the possible contribution of one of the three factors—the rhetorical input of the leader—to create change in long standing, violent conflicts. However, it is important in future studies to explore the relative impact of the other two, namely society and context, on the change process in the conflict, and empirically consider the interaction between these factors.

To conclude, leaders are crucial to the peacemaking process because they set the policies of conflict resolution and help guide their constituents towards changes in perception, values, and emotions ([Kelman, 1999](#)). Leaders are expected to innovate, and the trust they receive from their followers ([Hollander, 1958](#)) and the power and status of their role ([Hogg, 2007](#)) enable them to deviate from their group's norms. While previous research has examined the conditions that allow leaders to oppose their group norms (see [Abrams, Randsley de Moura, Marques, & Hutchison, 2008](#)), the current study advances the understanding of the diverse ways in which leaders can contribute to the processes necessary for making peace in inter-group conflicts.

Our study therefore significantly contributes to the research in the fields of peace studies and leadership. It conceptualizes for the first time the unique social and psychological dynamics of peace processes following an intense conflict, which are characterized by duality. In addition, we suggest an original theoretical frame—later empirically implemented in the Israeli case—for the tasks leaders fulfill in peace processes while considering and elucidating the meaning and impact of the context and collective beliefs and emotions of the group.

On a final note, peacefully resolving conflicts which cause death, destruction and great suffering in different parts of the world should be considered as an important goal for scholars and leaders alike. The current study suggests insights into the contribution leaders make to the process of peacemaking. Although this process is fragile and easily reversible, as events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the beginning of the twenty-first century indicate, containing their duality while shaping a gradual change of shared cognitions and emotions can offer hope for determined leaders as part of multi-level efforts aiming for peace.

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## Appendix A. Details on sampled speeches

Date	Preceding type of event in the conflict	Main target audience
July 12, 1992	Other Labor Party's victory in elections	Israeli
July 13, 1992	Other Construction of new government	Israeli
February 3, 1993	Negative security Deportation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists to Lebanon	Israeli
July 28, 1993	Negative security Military operation in Lebanon	Israeli
September 13, 1993	Positive political Oslo I Accord	International
September 21, 1993	Positive political Oslo I Accord	Israeli
February 28, 1994	Negative security Massacre in Hebron	Israeli
April 13, 1994	Negative security Suicide bombing attacks in Afula and Hadera	Israeli
May 4, 1994	Positive political Cairo Accord	International
May 11, 1994	Positive political Cairo Accord	Israeli
July 26, 1994	Positive political Joint Israeli-Jordanian declaration	International
October 30, 1994	Positive political Regional economic conference	International

December 10, 1994	Positive political Nobel Peace Prize	International
January 23, 1995	Negative security Suicide bombing attack at Beit-Lid	Israeli
July 24, 1995	Negative security Suicide bombing attack in Ramat-Gan	Israeli
August 21, 1995	Negative security Suicide bombing attack in Jerusalem	Israeli
September 28, 1995	Positive political Oslo II Accord	International
October 10, 1995	Positive political Oslo II Accord	Israeli
October 29, 1995	Positive political Regional economic conference	International
November 4, 1995	Positive political Rally supporting peace	Israeli

## Appendix B. Coding categories and their definitions

Category	Definitions	Conflict subcategory	Change and peace subcategory
Political goals	Refers to the content, justification, centrality, and confidence in society's goals in relation to the conflict.	Conflict goals	Change in the in-group's goals
Out-group image	Refers to the traits, values, and behaviors of the other side.	Negative image of out-group	Legitimation and differentiation of out-group
In-group image	Refers to the traits, values, behaviors, and uniqueness of one's own group.	Positive in-group image in conflict	Positive in-group image in peace
Security	Refers to the personal or collective sense of security, its importance, and the conditions necessary for the group's real and symbolic survival.	Security by force	Security through peace and change
Victimhood	Refers to harm or an attempt to harm one's group realistically or symbolically, in the past, present or future, with or without naming the harming group.	Exclusive victimhood	Mutual victimhood
Peace	Refers to peace as society's goal and the means and endeavors required for its achievement.	Failed past attempts and longing for peace	Realistic peace through negotiation
Relations with the out-group	Refers to the current or desired relationship with the other side—its nature, content, and centrality.	Conflictual relations with out-group	Gradual construction of relations with out-group
Fear	Includes reference to existing or potential threat to the group and its members—their condition, characteristics, and values.	Fear of the out-group	Fear of maintaining the conflict
Anger	Includes reference to the deeds of another group as an unjust and unfair violation of social norms	Monolithic anger	Differentiating anger
Hope	Includes reference to expectation for a positive outcome, with or without defining the period of time and means for achieving it.	Hope for in-group's goals	Hope for common goals
Dual contents	Includes reference to content expressing mixed feelings, conflicting goals, or ambivalence towards them.	Dual contents	

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