

# Israel's Cultural Trauma

*The Revival of Holocaust Discourses in the Current Crisis  
with Iran*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACNOWLEDGMENTS .....	III
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS .....	1
THE INTERACTION WITH A PARTICULAR OTHER .....	2
LEVELS OF ANALYSIS .....	3
<i>The Assumption</i> .....	3
<i>Theoretical Justification</i> .....	4
THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS .....	5
THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW PATTERNS OF HOSTILITIES .....	7
<b>2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>11</b>
IDENTITY INSPIRED SECURITY DILEMMA .....	11
DOMESTIC REALM UNDERSTANDING FOR INTERNATIONAL REALM UNDERSTANDING ..	13
THE THICK ACCOUNT OF IDENTITY .....	15
THE INTERACTION WITH THE ‘OTHER’ .....	16
<i>The Stimulated Frame of Time by a Particular Other</i> .....	16
THE CONSTITUTIVE ROLE OF MEMORY .....	17
<i>The Cultural Perception of Memory</i> .....	19
<i>The Traumatic Perception of Memory</i> .....	21
<i>The Incorporation of Trauma in the Speech</i> .....	22
SUMMARY .....	23
<b>3 METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>25</b>
THE HISTORICAL CONTINUITY .....	25
THE ABSTRACTION OF THEORY .....	26
THE METAPHORICAL AND NARRATIVE ANALYSIS .....	27
SUMMARY .....	29

THE DATA SETS .....	29
THE CONTENT .....	30
<b>4 THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE HOLOCAUST .....</b>	<b>31</b>
THE CONSTITUTIVE LEGACY OF THE HOLOCAUST DISCOURSE .....	31
<i>First Discourse: Power and Renewal</i> .....	32
<i>Second Discourse: the Eichmann Legacy</i> .....	35
SUMMARY .....	37
THE REVIVAL OF HOLOCAUST-RELATED-THEMES IN PERIODS OF CRISES .....	38
<i>1956: the Sinai Campaign</i> .....	38
<i>1967: the Six-Day War</i> .....	39
<i>1969-1973: the Aftermath of 1967; the War of Attrition and Terrorism</i> .....	42
<i>1973: the Yom-Kippur war</i> .....	42
<i>1981: Israel's Attack on an Iraqi Nuclear Facility</i> .....	43
<i>1982-1984: Lebanon War</i> .....	44
<i>1990-1991: the Persian Gulf War</i> .....	45
SUMMARY .....	46
THE SOCIOCOGNITIVE IMPLICATION FROM TRAUMA .....	47
SUMMARY .....	49
<b>5 ISRAEL'S HIGHEST AUTHORITY CODIFICATION OF THE 'IRANIAN THREAT' .....</b>	<b>51</b>
ISRAEL'S PRIME MINISTER IN GERMANY .....	52
<i>The Victimhood</i> .....	53
<i>The Renewal</i> .....	54
<i>The World's Conscience</i> .....	55
<i>The Legitimization of Power</i> .....	56
<i>Anxious led Mentality</i> .....	58
<i>Own Wish for Peace</i> .....	59
<i>Relating the Metaphor of the Holocaust to Iran</i> .....	59
<i>Putting the Prime Minister Speech in Context; the Jewish Clerk Clarification</i> .....	61
ISRAEL'S PRIME MINISTER IN YAD-VASHEM .....	63

<i>Contemporary Frame of Reference</i> .....	63
<i>Siege Mentality</i> .....	65
<i>Appeal of Blame to the World Conscience</i> .....	66
<i>Giving-Up on the World Conscience</i> .....	67
<i>Israel's Implied Threat</i> .....	68
ISRAEL'S PRIME MINISTER IN THE U.S. ....	71
<i>The Slogan</i> .....	71
<i>Unifying Victimization</i> .....	72
<i>A Victorious form of Defeatism</i> .....	73
<i>Beautiful Death</i> .....	74
<i>The Intimidating Consequences from the World Apathy</i> .....	75
SUMMARY .....	79
<b>6 THE DISCURSIVE TENDENCY OF KEY POLITICAL FIGURES .....</b>	<b>83</b>
THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS .....	84
<i>The gas chambers stand as silent proof of the horrors</i> .....	84
<i>We know the lessons of the past</i> .....	85
<i>The promise of "never again"</i> .....	86
THE VICE PREMIER .....	88
<i>They think we have a bomb, let them think</i> .....	88
<i>Ahmadinejad is a Holocaust denier who wants a new Holocaust</i> .....	89
THE OPPOSITION LEADER .....	90
<i>It's 1938 and Iran is Germany; Ahmadinejad is preparing another Holocaust</i> .....	90
<i>Iran President more dangerous than Hitler</i> .....	92
SUMMARY .....	93
<b>7 CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<i>The Fixed Formation of the Discourse</i> .....	95
<i>The Cultural Trauma</i> .....	95
<i>The Destructive Potential of Symbolic Interaction</i> .....	96
<i>The Materialistic Realization of the Threat</i> .....	97
<i>The Holocaust Legacies</i> .....	98

<i>The Need for Future Research</i> .....	100
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>101</b>



# 1 Introduction

*“The Nazification of the enemy, whoever that enemy may be, and the transformation of security threats into danger of total annihilation of the state, seem to have characterized the way of speech of Israel’s political, social, and cultural elites, with very few exceptions.”*

This thesis concerns with a specific characteristic of the collective memory of the Holocaust in Israel: the revival of Holocaust representations in periods of crises. I examine this characterization of Israel’s sense of identity, in contemporary frame of references, and explore the *transformation of security threats into danger of total annihilation of the state* (as referred above by Zertal 2005, p.174) through the social category of the collective memory of the Holocaust and its representations in the Israeli discourse, in relation to Iran. Consequently, the research question that has guided this thesis from beginning to end has been:

*How the collective memory of the Holocaust (in Israel) is being revived in the current crisis with Iran?*

## ***The Unit of Analysis***

As suggested, this paper concerns with Israel domestically; its identities and discourses. However, the scope of this thesis does not allow me to investigate Israel’s diverse population, which is marked by cultural, religious, economic, political, and social cleavages (Horowitz & Lissak 1989). In the face of these divisions, I chose to concentrate on one social category in the Israeli society that represents, to some extent, a unifying element of Jewish Israeli society: the legacy of the Holocaust.

Works such as the *Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, by Tom Segev (1993), and *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, by Idith Zertal (2005), have shown that the collective memory of the Holocaust is a unifying element of Jewish Israeli sense of unity and common identity. In view of that, due to the constitutive role that the Holocaust plays in Israel's sense of common identity, the Israeli society is described, by some, in terms of "culture of death" (Zertal 2005) and mentality of siege (Bar-Tal & Teichman 2005).

In this regard, and from the perception that "state's identity in international politics cannot be constructed at home alone- it is only in interaction with a particular Other that the meaning of a state is established" (Hopf 2002, p.288), I chose to analyze how Israel's mentality of siege is represented in its *interaction with a particular Other*: the Islamic Republic of Iran.

### ***The Interaction with a Particular Other***

The following 'greeting' was mobilized by the leader of Iran to Israel's celebrations of its sixtieth anniversary:

"Look at our region... They [the Western powers] created a dirty black microbe called the Zionist regime to set upon the countries in the area like a beast of prey."<sup>1</sup>

The expression "dirty black microbe" is Nazi-oriented expression ("cholera microbes" (Dawidowicz 1982, p.58)). It is an age-old expression, which is 'borrowed' from Western sources, producing a symbiosis between European anti-Semitism and Middle Eastern anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

This statement, adds up to a traditional Holocaust denial by Iran; an obsession with the Holocaust of Europe's Jewry, which can be best illustrated by the current conservative regime in Iran. Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, began a media campaign to cast doubts on Israel's legitimacy and the significance of the Holocaust. That 'campaign', began in August 2006, with an exhibition of revolting

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<sup>1</sup> Terrorism-info.org (accessed: 30.05.2008) [online]. URL - [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/hi\\_210208e.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/hi_210208e.htm)

caricatures on the subject of the Holocaust<sup>2</sup>, and its climax was state sponsor conference on the Holocaust, the “International Conference to Review the Global Vision of the Holocaust”<sup>3</sup>, that took place in Teheran in December 2006.

Ahmadinejad’s advocacy of Holocaust denial is not a new or uniquely personal obsession of one man but an intensification of prevalent themes, in Islamic Iranian ideological discourse, and in the Arabic discourse as a whole<sup>4</sup>. As will be seen along the thesis, Iran’s rhetoric; the inclusion of the theme of the Holocaust in order to de-legitimize the State of Israel, together with its ongoing nuclear program, has contributed to the construction of a very hectic discourse domestically in Israel.

### ***Levels of Analysis***

From the perception that discourses tend to codify the unusual realities into usual realities that fit the already existing cultural meanings of a certain society, I aim to analyze the possibility in which Israeli politicians (*collective agents*) frame the Iranian issue via symbolic presentations. In other words, I will concentrate on the cultural memory of the Holocaust, as a predominant cultural meaning in Israel’s Jewish society, and interpret its assumed representations in relation to the Iranian issue, via the Israeli political discourse.

### **The Assumption**

With my personal acquaintance of the Israeli culture (as a native Israeli), and my academic interest in the Israeli society, I suspect that due to the macabre history of the Jews (symbolize here by the extermination of Europe Jewry) and the militant nature of the State of Israel (in a relatively hostile environment), the Israeli/Jewish

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<sup>2</sup> Holocaust Cartoon Contest 2006 (accessed: 30.05.2008) [online]. URL - <http://irancartoon.com/120/holocaust/index.htm>

<sup>3</sup> On December 11 and 12, 2006, the Iranian regime hosted a conference dedicated to the Holocaust, called the “International Conference on Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision”. The conference was held at the Institute for Political and International Studies, in Tehran, which belongs to the Iranian foreign ministry, and hosted some of the most notorious Holocaust deniers living today.

<sup>4</sup> See on Middle East anti-Semitism. The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) (accessed: 04.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.memri.org/antisemitism.htm>

maps of meaning, about the surrounding world, are highly cynical and defensive. Consequently, my assumption is that, in accordance with the traditional revival of Holocaust-related-themes (in Israel) in periods of crises (as will be presented in chapter four), Iran's maximization of its relevant power, together with its compulsive intervention with Israel's sense of identity, stimulates the memory of the Holocaust in the Israeli political discourse, indicating, in return, on its cultural traumatic nature.

### **Theoretical Justification**

This thesis is inspired by the discipline of interpretive constructivism, where scholars such as Gourevitch (2002), Guzzini (2000), Hopf (2002), Neufeld (1993) and Wendt & Fearon (2002) all emphasize that the nature of norms and identities, which is originated in the domestic realm, is highly valuable to international level understandings. The nature of norms and identities (domestically in Israel) is highlighted here by the conception of "collective memory" (Olick and Robbins 1998). And due to my interest in a hectic collective memory, such as the collective memory of the Holocaust, and in order to emphasize how this memory tends to be represented in contemporary frame of reference, I will theorize it as a "cultural trauma" (Alexander 2004; Assmann and Czaplicka 1995); an "essential trauma of Israeli society" (Bar – Tal & Teichman 2005, p.96) that tends to be represented in Israel in circumstances of the extreme (periods of crises), implying, in return, on its significance to the understandings of Israel's behaviour in the international arena.

I am concerned with how the memory of the Holocaust symbolically integrates in the Israeli political discourse, in regards with a tense international crisis. I seek to explain what the discourse says; what the Israeli discourse is, in relation to Iran, and how Holocaust-related-themes are being used in this respect. Such an explanation will hopefully be in value for better understanding Israel's sense of identity under circumstances of the extreme, and, in more abstract terms, to imply

how hostile myths may lead to fear of group extinction (Kaufmann 2001) and destructively influence the communication in the international realm.

### ***The structure of the thesis***

The next chapter, *chapter two*, is the theoretical framework of this thesis.

Theoretical accounts are given concerning how hostile myths might deteriorate a security dilemma (Kaufmann 2001), whereas, due to the destructive nature of this sort of communication, the “cutting edge of constructivist research” (Gourevitch 2002, p.319) is presented as an abstract theoretical conception that highlights the need to incorporate society’s identities, and discourses, in the studies of the international realm.

The objective of this paper is to reveal the construction of reality in the Israeli political discourse in regards to the Iranian issue, while as the traumatic memory of the Holocaust, uses me as unit of analysis. For that reason, I present the sociological theoretical model of “cultural trauma” (Alexander 2004); a hectic collective memory that is characterized by its tendency to revive in contemporary “frame of reference” (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, p.130). This cultural characterization will later guide me, in the analysis, in order to expose how the collective memory of the Holocaust operates, through “speech act theory” (Alexander 2004, 11), as an “essential trauma of Israeli society” (Bar – Tal & Teichman 2005, p.96).

*Chapter three* outlines the methodological considerations this thesis is founded on. Theoretical consideration concerning the “overlapping” and “historical continuity” of discourses will be presented and related to my theoretical foundations. Whereas, in order to identify how the cultural trauma of the Holocaust is communicated in the political Israeli discourse, two associating methods, the metaphorical analysis and the narrative analysis, will guide me in the analysis of the discourse.

Finally, due to my objective to detect the *overlapping* characteristics and *historical continuity* of Holocaust representations in today's political discourse (in regard to the Iranian issue), theoretical categories will be drawn from and answer the empirical data upon which this study is based. "Abstraction of theory" will therefore be of major importance in my interpretation of the discourse. And the constitutive Holocaust discourses, which will use me in the interpretation, will be presented in chapter four.

*Chapter four* contextualizes the constitutive legacy of the Holocaust in the Israeli sense of collectively. It visualizes the traditional revival of Holocaust-related-themes in periods of crises. And it presents a theoretical account concerning the sociocognitive implications of collective trauma domestically in Israel. The theoretical accounts that are presented in this *context* chapter are of great magnitude to the thesis. The theoretical framework that is constructed here is abstracted and drawn from to interpret the empirical data, in the actual analysis, and will hopefully be in practice to validate my theoretical assumption concerning the cultural traumatic nature of the collective memory of the Holocaust in Israel (its tendency to revive in contemporary *frame of reference*).

Chapter five and six constitute the analysis itself. *Chapter five* shows through indepth metaphorical and narrative interpretation, the *historical continuity* of Holocaust discourses in Israel, by analyzing Israel's highest authority (the Prime Minister) discursive tendency. This description and interpretation of the discourse, is followed by *chapter six*, which explores the stability and strength of the Prime Minister political discourse through an interpretation of three more influential political figures in the Israeli political sphere.

The conclusion, *chapter seven*, ties the previous chapters together and explains how the presented political discourse correlates with my theoretical conceptualization of Israel's cultural trauma, emphasizing, in return, how hostile myths may lead to fear of group extinction.

## ***The Introduction of New Patterns of Hostilities***

*How the Iranian issue is being portrayed by “official Israel”?*

Prior to the theoretical chapter I would like to establish an understanding of how Iran is being portrayed by “official Israel”. The official Israeli characterization of Iran is portrayed here by the internet site of Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>5</sup> (MFA).

The Iranian issue is receiving major attention in the official site of Israel’s MFA. It is being titled as the “Iranian threat” and the “threat” reveals around two types of anxieties: on the one hand, a physical/materialistic anxiety; which concerns with Iran’s “nuclear threat” and its “support of terror”. And on the other hand, an identity- related anxiety; which concerns with Iran’s “Holocaust denial” and its mobilization of anti-Zionist rhetoric’s.

The materialistic section of the “nuclear threat” presents an overview concerning Iran's nuclear program (the key developments in uranium enrichment and heavy-water technology). It concerns Iran’s development of delivery systems (missile abilities) and a discussion of the urgent need, by both the international community and Israel, to support and mobilize additional resolutions and measures against Iran.

The additional materialistic section concerns Iran’s “support of terror”. This section reveals official intelligent documents, which, most coherently, portray Iran as a “terrorism-sponsoring state”<sup>6</sup>. It highlights the relationships between Hizbullah and Iran; the strategic support of “Palestinian terrorism”<sup>7</sup> (by both Iran and Syria which are described as members of the same axis); and Iran’s

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<sup>5</sup> MFA (accessed: 04.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA>

<sup>6</sup> Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (accessed: 10.06.2008) [online]. URL - [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/iran\\_141107e.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/iran_141107e.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> MFA (accessed: 04.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Terror+Groups/Iranian+and+Syrian+support+for+Hizbullah+and+the+Palestinian+terrorist+organizations+18-Mar-2007.htm>

connection to the Buenos-Aires bombings<sup>8</sup>. In sum, the general argument in the “support of terror” section is that, “since Khomeini's rise to power in 1979 Iran has maintained aspirations to lead the radical Islamic camp and continues to deepen its ties to extremist states and terrorist groups throughout the Middle East”<sup>9</sup>.

Accordingly, “official Israel” clearly portrays Iran as an actor that introduces a physical threat to Israel’s existent. The “terrorism weapon” is described as a strategic tool by Iran for promoting its national interests - *to lead the radical Islamic camp against Israel’s existent* - and its nuclear program is described as no less than a “nuclear threat”. Nevertheless, to my judgment, both of those materialistic-physical threats can not be presented as ‘so’ “threatening” without the ideological context, which interrelates with them.

As an indication, Iran’s President (Mahmoud Ahmadinejad) statements (e.g. “The countdown for the Zionist regime's destruction began”) are highly noticeable in both the “Nuclear threat” and “terror support” sections, and are associated and portrayed, by leading Israeli personals, with the probability of an actual physical confrontation (e.g. “he has threatened the State of Israel and denied the Holocaust, all while Iran ominously develops a military nuclear weapons program”<sup>10</sup>).

I would like to concentrate on this aspect of the communication between the actors. The identity-related context of the Israeli Iranian conflict will be the core of my research. My aim is to point on the destructive potential that identity issues might have on already tense relations of power between two highly militarized actors. In order to ‘isolate’ the identity issues, from the wide context of such a conflict, the social category of the collective memory of the Holocaust will serve

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<sup>8</sup> The bombings of the Israeli Embassy (1992) and the Jewish community center (1994), in Buenos-Aires, where hundreds were killed and wounded.

<sup>9</sup> Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (accessed: 10.06.2008) [online]. URL - [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/iran\\_hezbollah\\_e1b.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/iran_hezbollah_e1b.htm)

<sup>10</sup> Israel’s Ambassador to the UN (Dan Gillerman) in the U.N. General Assembly (June 6, 2007), following Ahmadinejad statement: the “countdown for the destruction of Israel” (accessed: 10.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israel+and+the+UN/Speeches+-+statements/Statement+by+Israeli+Amb+Gillerman+to+the+UN+Security+Council+14-Jul-2006.htm>



me as a field of investigation; for describing the Israeli political discourse concerning Iran.

And indeed, the conceptualization of the “Iranian threat”, by “official Israel”, most distinguishably concentrates on the sensitive theme of the Holocaust. It appears in a separate section, under the title “Holocaust denial” (out of three sections: “nuclear threat”; “support of terror; and “Holocaust denial”), and is a major theme in the communication of Israel’s MFA.

In sum, the Iranian issue is officially titled in Israel as the “Iranian threat” and, as was illustrated above, the “threat” reveals around two types of threats: a ‘physical threat’ and an ‘ideological threat’. Apparently, both play a communicative role in the contemporary crisis with Iran and, as will be seen along the thesis, the associations between hostile rhetoric’s to an actual physical threat are constant. I therefore find it crucial to raise questions concerning the influencing factors of this communication and, in pursued after my interest in the collective memory of the Holocaust, I would like to explore how Holocaust anxieties are being revived in the Israeli political discourse to describe the “Iranian threat”.



## 2 Theoretical Framework

The physical/materialistic nature of the “Iranian threat”, as portrayed above (Iran’s “support of terror” and its “nuclear program”), can be well highlighted and presented as the origins of today’s hostility between the two actors (Iran and Israel). However, it is of evidence that identity issues also play a role in the Israeli-Iranian conflict. Evidently (as portrayed above by Israel’s MFA), hostile rhetoric’s and the identity-related-theme of the Holocaust obtain major capacity in Israel’s MFA; for describing the “Iranian threat”. It indicates that for fully describing the Israeli Iranian conflict identity issues can not be neglected. It (identity issues) is part of the explanation of the conflict and, to my opinion; it should be added to the established academic tendency to describe the Israeli-Iranian conflict with quantity accounts of the relations of power between the sides.

In view of that, my aim is to explain, through discourse analysis, how identity issues play a role in this conflict as my fundamental concern is with the Israeli domestic realm. However, as we saw, materialistic issues (e.g. Iran’s “nuclear threat”) do appear in the Israeli discourse concerning Iran, and therefore, I feel obligated to open with theoretical accounts that ‘bridge’ between ‘materialistic inspired’ and ‘identity inspired’ ontology’s. Those theoretical ‘justifications’ will be followed by theoretical sections that will directly relate to my interest in the collective memory of the Holocaust as a traumatic cultural memory in the Israeli society.

### ***Identity Inspired Security Dilemma***

According the theorization of the “myth-symbol complex” (Kaufmann 2001, p.25) hostile prejudice may be a pre condition for potential violent (between the sides). It resemble the conventional Security Dilemma (SD) - where the build-up of

defensive/offensive power might create fears and motivate an arm race, whilst the factor of opportunity can stimulate actual acts of hostility - only that, according to the *myth-symbol complex*, the weaponry is the mobilization of hostile attitudes; the fears are identity fears; and the opportunity can be from an emotionally sporadic reaction to a strategic mobilization by predators (Kaufmann 2001, pp.32-36).

As argued, “[h]ostile and fear rise as a result of symbolic events that activate the myths, such as ... a leader explicitly manipulating symbols” (p.34). In return, those *symbolic events* are argued to stimulate “emotional expression” (p.28), in the political process, where “people choose by responding to the most emotionally potent symbol evoked” (p.28).

The description and interpretation of the Israeli discourse, concerning the “Iranian threat”, will show that “collective agent”<sup>11</sup> (Alexander 2004, 11), in the Israeli Jewish society, responds through *emotional expression*, to the most *emotionally potent symbol evoked*. The most *emotionally potent symbol evoked* will be signified in this thesis through the memory of the Holocaust, which is constantly being evoked by Iran’s current regime.

In this respect, Kaufmann (2001, pp.34-36) warns us that hostile myths may lead to fear of group extinction and the opportunity to mobilize (in materialistic terms) may provoke violence. The likelihood for the eruption of violent between Israel and Iran can be only assumed (although that many perceive the dominant Shi’a militia in Lebanon (Hizballah) as an Iranian proxy (e.g. Israel’s MFA) indicating, in return, on the militarized nature of the conflict between the sides (Israel and Iran)). However, a description and interpretation of the *emotional expression of fear of group extinction* can be detected through discourse analysis. And indeed, the analysis reveals that, the “Iranian threat” evokes *emotional expressions of fear of group extinction* in the Israeli political discourse.

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<sup>11</sup> Based on Weber’s definition of the “carrier groups”; agents who are based in particular places in the social structure and have the ability to construct “meaning” in the public sphere (Alexander 2004, p.11).

In sum, from the gloomy perspective that “very strong hostile myths may need very little political opportunity to cause war” (Snyder & Jervis 1999, p.37), an interpretation of the *emotional expression* in the Israeli Iranian discourse might hold some academic value.

### ***Domestic Realm Understanding for International Realm Understanding***

As suggested, I do not want to rule out the physical/materialistic nature of the Israeli Iranian conflict (more specifically, its influence on the discourse), in view of that, I will be guided (in the description of the discourse) by the so called “cutting edge of constructivist research” (Gourevitch 2002, p.319). It is a supplementary perspective that do not deny crucial materialistic patterns of behaviour, which characterized much of the international politics scholarship, but do suggests that other variables besides the distribution of military capabilities, such as norms and identities, can cause the likelihood of conflict.

According to Brooks (1997) a conflict can well depend on the nature of shared understandings regarding norms and identities between “actors”<sup>12</sup> (Wendt & Fearon 2002, p. 63). The nature of norms and identities is originated in the domestic realm and therefore, domestic level analysis is regarded as highly valuable to international level understandings (p.456). Gourevitch (2002) argues, as well, that an interpretation of states behaviour in the international arena depends, to some extent, on social and cultural domestic interpretations (pp.315-316). Such incorporation is argued by Neufeld (1993, p.230) to help and re-establish the fundamental commonality between institutions regulating interaction, in the domestic realm, and institutions regulating interaction, in the system realm.

Interpretive social science proposes that states ought to be analyzed domestically in such a manner that will uncover their nature of norms and

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<sup>12</sup> Modern constructivists tend to define major institutions and organizations as actors, because their concern with the role of identities construction implying that organization, institutions or states are all actors in the formation and construction of identity (Wendt & Fearon 2002, p. 63).

identities. Society's nature of norms and identities can be analyzed in a wide range of methodical means and progress our understanding of how the system level is actually constructed. Therefore, the realist tradition- with its conceptualization of the factors that reshape the balance of power, in the system level (mostly materialistic capabilities), can gain much from domestic interpretive methods; methods which can help to explain and understand the balance of power as a social constructed institution (Neufeld 1993, pp.54-57).

However, as suggested, interpretive constructivism is a supplementary perspective and it does not deny crucial materialistic patterns of behaviour, which characterized much of the international politics scholarship. Concepts like power seeking states are still relevant for our understanding of the international system (Neufeld 1993, p.58). In other words, as argued by Guzzini (2000, pp. 159-160), interpretive constructivism does not deny the existence of a materialist phenomenal world, external to thoughts, but theoretically stresses that practices such as norms and identities can constitute themselves as objects of knowledge that should therefore be studied for interpretive purpose.

My discourse analysis concerns with Israel domestically and wish to uncover some aspects of its nature of norms and identities. However, as suggested above, I do not deny crucial materialistic patterns of behaviour, on the contrary, it is of evidence that materialistic patterns of behaviour characterize much of the interaction between the two actors (Israel and Iran), and most noticeably appear in the discourse (e.g. Iran's "nuclear threat" and Iran's "threat of terror"). Nevertheless, as will be seen, materialistic patterns of behaviour clearly associates (in the discourse) with identity-related issues, such as the memory of the Holocaust. Therefore, the cutting edge of constructivist research, as presented above, which pay much attention on variables such as norms and identities, but do not deny crucial materialistic patterns of behaviour, will hopefully progress our understanding of how the international realm is influencing towards a certain construction of meaning in the domestic realm and the other way around.

## ***The Thick Account of Identity***

After explicating the need to incorporate domestic studies of norms and identities for better understanding the international realm, the requested question should be: how the nature of norms and identities can be detected?

It is argued that the study of society's identity leaves us with a cognitive account that according to Hopf (2002) is "thickly inductive and empirical" (p.3). Individuals, so it is argued, tend to make the "unfamiliar familiar in terms of the identity of the self" (p.6). The complex phenomenon world tends to be "categorized" because individuals have a need to understand" (p.6). *Collective agents* fall under the same categorization of *individuals* because they socialize in a certain society and are therefore influenced by the same social categories, which constitute society's collective identity; they, as well, *have a need to understand*. It has been coherently described by Weldes (1999): "state officials [*collective agents*]... approach international politics with an already quite comprehensive and elaborate appreciation of the world... rooted in collective meanings already produced, at least in part, in domestic political and cultural contexts" (p.9).

Consequently, in order to make sense of the social world, and in order to well interpret the construction of meaning by *collective agents*, it is suggested to concentrate on social categories that are categorized by individuals in order to better make sense of the phenomenon world.

Gourevitch (2002) regards those empirical social categories as "predominates normative orientation of the society" (pp. 318-319) and 'luckily' enough my target of investigation, Israel, is prosperous with *predominate normative orientations* (relating to its tragic past and present). Hopefully, through focusing on explicit *predominate normative orientation*, such as the collective memory of the Holocaust, I will be able to expose how specific norms and identities are being constructed and instrumentalized in the current crisis with Iran. And more specifically, how the collective memory of the Holocaust, which is a

comprehensive and elaborate collective meaning in Israeli society, is being constructed by *collective agents* in the current crisis with Iran.

### ***The Interaction with the ‘Other’***

It has been suggested by Hopf (2002, p.278) that, “domestic society, its identities, discourses, and relationships to the state, must be brought back into any constructivist account of world politics”. However, “state’s identity in international politics cannot be constructed at home alone- it is only in interaction with a particular Other that the meaning of a state is established” (p.288). In view of that, Israel will be analyzed domestically (its identities and discourses) in direct *relation to its interaction with a particular Other: the Islamic Republic of Iran*. And Hopefully, Hopf’s (2002) assumption, that the communication between actors and the exchange of knowledge, yet alone, might result with a construction of meaning (pp.288-290), will be validated, in my empirical study, and expose how the communication between Israel and Iran is influencing towards a specific construction of meaning; the revival of the social category of the collective memory of the Holocaust.

### **The Stimulated Frame of Time by a Particular Other**

Due to my interest in how the social category of the Holocaust operates in periods of crises, I will concentrate on how it is been emotionally expressed, in the Israeli political discourse, in relation to Iran’s mobilized rhetoric’s (towards Israel), which uses me, in return, as a sort of ‘manipulator’ that ‘stimulates’ a certain construction of meaning in Israel.

Inspired by a particular interest in the memory of the Holocaust and Kaufmann’s theorization that: *[h]ostile and fear rise as a result of symbolic events that activate the myths, such as ... a leader explicitly manipulating symbols*, I would like to construct my research in relation to a very specific event, which can be well regarded as a *symbolic event*. A *symbolic event* that apparently stimulates ‘rhetoric warfare’ between Iran and Israel:



The Holocaust convention (the “International Conference to Review the Global Vision of the Holocaust”) was a two-day conference held in Tehran, December 11-12, 2006, and is referred by “official Israel” as a “Holocaust denial conference”<sup>13</sup>. This event is perceived by me as a *symbolic event* because symbols (such as the Holocaust) were clearly manipulated there, activating, in return, certain *myths* in Israel.

The “Holocaust convention” sparked and still sparks a great deal of Iranian-related-discourses in Israel. For that reason, I decided to center my research on the months previous to the convention, but after the known-about of its expected occurrence; a frame time of four months, from September 12, 2006 to December 12, 2006, where I describe and interpret the *emotional magnitude* of the Israeli political discourse, which related, explicitly or implicitly, to the social category of the Holocaust.

In sum, an identity-inspired domestic investigation was presented as thickly inductive and empirical and as crucial for better understanding international phenomena. In this respect, the social category of the collective memory of the Holocaust will be described as a predominant cultural category in the domestic Israeli realm and its employment, by *collective agents*, in the discourse, in relation to the “Iranian threat”, will be describe and interpreted. Hopefully, such an identity inspired investigation will contribute for our understanding of the Israeli domestic realm, and for the understanding of the Israeli Iranian crisis.

### ***The Constitutive Role of Memory***

The French sociologist Halbwaches coined the term “collective memory” (Olick & Robbins 1998, p.109). He argued that individuals remember only in the social context and memory is an act of social construction. Such definition opened the way to the study of memory as a social phenomenon.

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<sup>13</sup> As portrayed in Israel’s MFA (accessed: 04.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA>

Collective memory plays a fundamental role in the notion of social identity, since it “concerns how we acquire our personal and social identities” (Olick & Robbins 1998, p.122) and since it is “a central, if not the central, medium through which identities are constituted” (p.133). It is an extension from the traditional perception of identity - in psychological individualist terms - to the collective understanding of how identities are being formulated; how identity works in the social level; and how symbolic dimensions of culture, such as norms and values, influence the social process (p.108).

Communities are argued to constitute their identities in accordance with their history. In view of that, the study of collective memory seeks to reveal how the past is being retold and how the present narrative is being constructed. It examines community’s constitutive narrative of the past as “it raises questions about the transmission, preservation, and alteration of these frameworks over time” (Olick & Robbins 1998, p.108). The constitutive role that collective memory plays in a community applies also to the mere complex community of the nation-state, which “despite internal divisions along generational, regional, religious, and other lines, has often claimed to be the primary form of organizing social identity” (Olick & Robbins 1998, p.123).

In this respect, in view of the constitutive role of the collective memory of the Holocaust in Israel and its traditional revival in periods of crises (as will be presented in chapter four), the goal of this thesis is to detect the symbolic dimension of the memory of the Holocaust as a ‘fixed’ cultural memory in the Israeli Jewish society and how it is being formulated in relation to an international crisis (the Iranian crisis). I would like to raise questions concerning the *transmission, preservation, and alteration* of the memory of the Holocaust over time and in relation to a contemporary crisis. Does the collective memory of the Holocaust is still the central *medium* through which identities are constituted, domestically in Israel, in periods of crises?

As suggested, the collective memory plays a fundamental role in the notion of social identity since it is constituted by powerful symbolic dimensions of culture that are based on historic events. However, it is a wide definition that falls under the enormous field of the construction of national identity, by the nation state, and therefore; it is suggested (in methodological terms) to “specify at a more middle level how memory processes operate within specific social institutions” (Olick & Robbins 1998, p.122). Such a “middle level”, in my regards, is the collective memory of the Holocaust as a ‘fixed’ cultural memory in the Israeli Jewish society and how it operates within specific social institution in the Israeli domestic realm; specific social institution that is characterized here by the discursive tendency of the Israeli political sphere.

### **The Cultural Perception of Memory**

In relation to the presented above I find the conception of the “cultural memory” as instrumental for my purpose of locating and explaining the constitutive role that collective memories might play in the construction of meaning. The cultural memory is a collective concept that is embedded in the societal practice as a whole, on the rituals, texts and images by which societies interpret their past. It seeks to explore how the past shapes society’s customs and values and it does so by a “cultural-topological interest” (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995, p.133). In other words, it concentrates on the relation between memory and culture. It is originated in culturalist interactions and can be best illustrated in contrast to the everyday communications of the “communicative memory” (pp.125-126).

The *communicative memory* is described as the wide range of everyday communications. It is the everyday communications of memories that are mediating between individuals and groups. Every group is communicating through intimate collective memories that are originated in the group history, and subsequently; a “common image” of the community past is being constructed (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995, pp.126-127). However, such everyday

communications are “characterized by a high degree of nonspecialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability, and disorganize” (p.126). Accordingly, there is a constant shift of images and even though that the common images are based on history, the “horizon” of the collective memories (as represented by the communicative memory) “does not extend more than eighty to (at the very most) one hundred years into the past” (p.127). The shift of collective memories is argued to occur in direct relation to the passing of time. And in specific relevance to my line of interest, the everyday communication of collective memories is instable because it “offers no fixed point which would bind it to the ever expanding past in the passing of time” (p.127). As suggested, it is precisely the *fixed* cultural frames and discourses (in the Israeli society) that I seek to detect.

It was argued, in this respect, that “fixity can only be achieved through a cultural formation and therefore [the fixity of the cultural memory] lies outside of informal everyday memory” (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995, p.127).

Accordingly, I would like to adopt Assmann and Czaplicka’s (1995) theorization of the cultural memory - a historical memory that is constant in time and cultural by nature - and apply it to the collective memory of the Holocaust; because, as suggested, my interest is in the *fixed* normative orientations of Israel’s society. I am interested in the collective memory of the Holocaust which is a *fixed* common image in the Israeli Jewish society; a collective memory that is a “master commemorative narrative”<sup>14</sup> (Zerubavel 1997, p.6) in Israel’s Jewish society and, as will be seen, a collective memory that is functioning as a historical memory with *fixed* cultural form that marks Israel society emergence as an independent social entity, and influencing, in return, on the group’s sense of common identity and culture.

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<sup>14</sup> A “master commemorative narrative” is an event that marks the group’s emergence as an independent social entity (Zerubavel 1997, p.6). It is a commemorative narrative that assists in portraying the group as a distinct unit vis-à-vis others and is typically reinforced by the “annual calendar, and the liturgical cycle [which] typically disrupt the flow of time by highlighting recurrent patterns in the group’s experiences” (p.7). Such is the Holocaust that, as will be seen, received the most symbolic place in Israel’s annual calendar.

Further more, it is argued that “fateful events of the past” (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995, p.129) are the exact kind of collective memories that might be interpreted as cultural memories and that collective memories of *fateful events* tends to revive and reproduce in contemporary terms. Does the *fateful event* of the Holocaust is being reproduce in contemporary terms?

The capacity of the collective memory of the Holocaust to reconstruct itself in contemporary “frame of reference” (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995, p.130) will indicate on its cultural origin and help to theorize my assumption concerning the revival of Holocaust-related-themes in the current crisis with Iran.

In sum, the cultural memory (as a sub theory of the collective memory discipline) will hopefully be in assistant for describing how the historical memory of the Holocaust has been constructed towards a *fixed* cultural heritage, domestically in Israel, and how it is being revived in contemporary *frame of reference* (in relation to the Iranian crisis). Moreover, the interpretation of the cultural heritage of the memory of the Holocaust, domestically in Israel, will hopefully indicate on certain constituted norms and values in the Israeli society; constituted norms and values that, as will be seen next, are rotted in cultural trauma.

### **The Traumatic Perception of Memory**

As suggested above, the fateful event of the past - the Holocaust of European Jewry - will be presented as *fixed* cultural formation for explaining some aspects in Israel’s “area of objectivised culture” (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, p.127). I would like next to expand this culturalist perception with the sociological theoretical model of “cultural trauma” (Alexander 2004), which was constructed through case studies such as the Holocaust, the slavery in the U.S., and September 11. According to the theoretical model of cultural trauma, when members of a certain society feel that they have been subjected to a “horrendous event” (Alexander 2004, p.1) not only that this event will be highly representative in

society's sense of collectively it will also tend to be associated with contemporary events.

Accordingly, the collective memory of the Holocaust is argued to be an "essential trauma of Israeli society" (Bar – Tal & Teichman 2005, p.96). Not only that the memory of the Holocaust took an identity constitutive role in the process of Israel's state building it also operates as a major narrative in Israel's society in contemporary *frame of reference*. As suggested by Bar-Tal & Teichman (2005, p.96):

"The trauma of the Holocaust leaves an indelible mark on the national psychology, the tenor and content of public life, the conduct of foreign affairs, on politics, education, literature and the arts".

As suggested above; will be further presented in chapter four; and tested in the analysis chapters, the representation of the collectivist trauma of the Holocaust in the Israeli society is of clear evidence; indicating, in return, on its traumatic nature (*the Holocaust... the tenor and content of public life*).

Moreover, following the theorization that cultural trauma tends to be associated with contemporary events (contemporary events that are symbolized, following the traumatic experience of the past, as a fundamental threat to society's existence), we will clearly see (in chapter four) that contemporary threats to Israel were traditionally symbolized (in the political discourse in Israel) as fundamental threats to society's existence. In view of that, the goal of this study is to explore this 'traditional tendency' in the most contemporary terms - In relation to the current crisis with Iran.

### **The Incorporation of Trauma in the Speech**

Both the representation and the revival of cultural trauma in contemporary terms are explained by the "speech act theory" (Alexander 2004, 11). It is a process in where a *collective agent* communicates with his/her audience (members of the *carrier group*) in a symbolic terminology, which implicitly or explicitly relates to

a traumatic event of the past. By so doing, a well manipulated and mediated traumatic historic event, which is already culturally constructed and established in society's structure of meaning, might transform toward a "new master narrative" (p.12) and enter "into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity" (pp. 10-12).

In other words, *collective agents* are argued to reconstruct the trauma claim in contemporary terms. I will tend to follow the theorization of the *speech act theory*, in the analysis chapters, in order to identify if the collective memory of the Holocaust, which is culturally constructed and established in Israel's structure of meaning, is manipulated and mediated by *collective agents* to explain a contemporary phenomenon. Do *collective agents* (in Israel) reconstruct the trauma claim of the Holocaust in relation to the current crisis with Iran?

### **Summary**

It was argued that hostile attitudes might evoke emotional expressions of *fear of group extinction* and destructively influence a SD. From this perception I decided to theoretically 'justify' why the international arena depends, to some extent, on social and cultural domestic interpretations. However, as presented in the introduction to the "Iranian threat", materialistic patterns of behavior characterize much of the interaction between Israel and Iran and consequently, concepts like power seeking states are relevant for the understanding of the discourse of this international phenomenon.

Accordingly, I presented the so called *cutting edge of constructivist research*, which pay much attention on variables such as norms and identities but do not deny crucial materialistic patterns of behaviour. It is a theoretical paradigm that will hopefully progress our understanding of how the international realm is influencing towards a certain construction of meaning in the domestic realm or the other way around.

Society's identity is *thickly inductive and empirical* (due to the categorization of the reality by individuals). I chose, in this regard, to concentrate on the social category of the Holocaust; a social category that can symbolize the emotional-led interaction between Israel and Iran.

Moreover, due to the nature of this social category, domestically in Israel, the manipulation of it, by Iran, might evoke, as described by Kaufmann, emotional expressions of *fear of group extinction*. Does Iran's manipulation of the memory of the Holocaust (as symbolized by the "Holocaust convention") evoke emotional expressions of *fear of group extinction* in the Israeli political discourse?

The tendency of this collective memory, in the Israeli society, to reconstruct, objectivised, and communicated, in contemporary terms (as presented by the *speech act theory*) will validate my characterization of the collective memory of the Holocaust as a cultural trauma, in the Israeli society, and will justify, to my opinion, the need to incorporate identity-related researches in international studies.

In other words, as will be presented, the collective memory of the Holocaust represents the ultimate painful injury to the Israeli collectivity. Therefore, I presented theoretical accounts that concern with cultural trauma. If, indeed, the collective memory of the Holocaust will be detected in the discourse, as a theme that is being repeatedly reconstructed in contemporary frame of reference, than, my assumption, concerning the cultural trauma of the Holocaust in Israel, will be validated; implying, in more general terms, concerning the need to incorporate identity studies in the field of international relations. To my opinion, the incorporation of cultural trauma in Israel's sense of identity might destructively influence its behaviour in the international arena. Israel's behaviour in the international arena will be specified in this thesis through its political communication.



### 3 Methodology

As suggested above, my concern is with *fixed* cultural discourses in the Israeli society. A construction of meaning through fixed cultural narratives that might influence, in return, on society's sense of common identity and culture. The cultural memory of the Holocaust will be presented in such tendency; a traumatic historical memory that is constant in time and cultural by nature and is influencing to a large extent on Israel's sociocognitive perception.

Accordingly, my objective is to describe and interpret how such traumatic historical memory might be associated with a contemporary "threat". Does the traditional tendency to associate contemporary threats with the existential experience of the Holocaust (as will be presented in chapter four) can be verified in regards with the current crisis with Iran? And if so, what are the constitutive meanings of the constructed discourses?

In order to account those inquiries, the analysis will be focused, first of all, on detecting a historical continuity regarding the traditional tendency of the memory of the Holocaust to appear in periods of crises. Secondly, through abstraction of theory, I will interpret the discourse with regards to the constitutive origins of the Holocaust discourses. And finally, the analysis will be guided by the metaphor and the narrative analysis, which will be in assistance for locating the *fixed* cultural meanings in the text, as they are constructed by *collective agents*.

#### ***The Historical Continuity***

The historical tendency of Holocaust-related-themes to revive (domestically in Israel) in periods of crises is of major concern in this study. Because, the tendency of a memory to reconstruct itself in contemporary *frame of reference*, not only points on the stability of the discourse, but also indicates on its traumatic cultural

origin. Can this tendency be detected in today's crisis with Iran? Can a historical continuity (in the discourse) be detected?

Those inquiries will be approached in chapter four, with a presentation of the historical tendency of Holocaust-related-themes to dominate the discourse in periods of crises. Chapter four ('the Cultural Context of the Holocaust') will be presented prior to the analysis chapters, in order to demonstrate the extent of this social phenomenon in Israel, and to verify later (through the actual analysis) if, indeed, the historical tendency of Holocaust-related-themes to revive in periods of crisis "overlap" (Milliken 1999, p.234) in today's discursive tendency.

In other words, the stability of the discourse, and the assumed historical continuity of the discourse, will be tested in an analysis of a contemporary political discourse.

### ***The Abstraction of Theory***

Abstraction of theory, "in the sense that theoretical categories are drawn from and answer to the empirical data upon which a study is based" (Milliken 1999, p.234), is commonly used in discourse analysis. Due to my tendency to detect *overlapping* characteristics and *historical continuity* of a certain discourse, *abstraction* will be of major importance in my interpretation of the discourse.

Two sets of theoretical categories will be constructed, in order to interpret the empirical content: the first set of theoretical categories regards the constitutive role of the memory of the Holocaust in Israel's sense of identity, and the second set of theoretical categories regards the sociocognitive implications (domestically in Israel) from the cultural trauma of the Holocaust. Both sets, of theoretical categories, will be constructed in chapter four and later be drawn (abstracted) for better interpreting the empirical data.

Following my interest in the *fixed* cultural nature of the Holocaust memory, and how it integrates in the hegemonic discourse in circumstances of the extreme (periods of crises), the first set of theoretical categories (the constitutive Holocaust

discourses), will briefly describe the origins of the two constituting Holocaust discourses in Israel: the constitutive narrative of *power* and *renewal* and the constitutive legacy of the Eichmann trial. Those constituting discourses will be *abstracted* for the interpretation of the content and will hopefully be in assistance to emphasize the instrumental logic of the memory of the Holocaust and the stability of the discourse.

The second set of theoretical categories (the sociocognitive implications), will include the categorization of Israel's society in terms of "culture of death", and "siege mentality", and will hopefully be in value for implying concerning the assumed implications that such cultural trauma might have on Israel's behavior in the international realm.

Moreover, the method of abstraction will be of help also in validation regards. It was argued that: "[a]n analysis can be said to be complete [validated] when upon adding new texts and comparing their object spaces, the researcher finds consistently that the theoretical categories she has generated work for those texts" (Milliken 1999, p.234). Accordingly, throughout my interpretation, of contemporary empirical data, I will explore the consistency between theoretical categories and the empirical data. If indeed a consistency exists it will support my assumptions regarding the revival of Holocaust anxieties in the current crisis with Iran.

### ***The Metaphorical and Narrative Analysis***

The essence of my interpretations, as suggested above, will surround around the *overlapping* of discourses, for showing the *historical continuity* of the discourse in periods of crises, and around the *abstraction* of theory, for interpreting the instrumental logic of the memory of the Holocaust; the stability of the discourse; and for implying concerning the sociocognitive implications of such a memory on Israel's society. Nevertheless, in order to locate the relevant content from the text

two associating methods - the metaphorical analysis and the narrative analysis - will guide me in the analysis of the discourse.

According to the metaphorical analysis leading metaphors that repeatedly appear in the content can be represented as hegemonic discourses with fix dominant meanings. In other words, the attention in the analysis will be directed towards “metaphors used regularly in the language practices of a group or society to make sense of the world” (Milliken 1999, p.235).

The concentration on hegemonic discourses, with fix dominant meanings, is appropriate for my descriptive objectives. Descriptive objectives that are orientated in revealing and interpreting metaphors that are rooted in fix dominant meanings of the Israeli society (represented here by the collective memory of the Holocaust) and appear in the Israeli discourse concerning the current crisis with Iran.

Moreover, in accordance with the already presented *speech act theory* it is argued that, *collective agents* tend to construct and codified understanding of the ‘real world’ in a way that will fit already existing cultural meanings, because, the framing of an issue will easily make sense “to the extent that it can be situated within ‘a range of known social and cultural identifications’ or ‘maps of meaning’ about the social world” (Allen 2004, p. 81). Such theoretical perception sharpens the understanding that a constructed discourse may be guided by culturalist-symbolic reasoning and it logically suggests that narratives might play a crucial role in the construction of meaning and the retelling of history by *collective agents*.

From such a perception the narrative approach is a practical methodological tool for investigation. The narrative approach calls to linguistically interpret rhetoric’s as “cultural stories” (Silverman 2003, p.345); cultural stories that fit the available and familiar narratives of the society (Cottle 2003, pp.344-346). In accordance with my motivation to validate the assumption, concerning the cultural

traumatic origins of the collective memory of the Holocaust, I find this approach as a practical tool.

The interpretation of texts, as cultural stories, will point on hegemonic discourses that with their *fix dominant meanings* will help to reveal the nature of the symbolic terminology that, implicitly or explicitly, being used by *collective agents* in their construction of meaning concerning the Iranian issue.

### **Summary**

As presented, the construction of meaning is best successful if it is mobilized by metaphors and narratives, which relate to the audience *cultural meanings*. In view of that, my goal is to reveal the *emotional magnitude* of this sort of communication. I will therefore explore the historical continuity and the stability of the discourse over time and interpret it (through *abstraction*) in accordance with constituting theories that will emphasize and reveal the instrumental logic of the discourse, and the fix dominant meanings of the discourse; a discourse which is constructed by *collective agents* as *cultural stories* that fit the available and familiar narratives of the society.

I presented above three methodological tools (the historical continuity, the abstraction of theory and the metaphorical/narrative analysis) that will hopefully be in assistance for detecting and stressing the cultural and symbolic representation of the collective memory of the Holocaust in the Israeli discourse concerning Iran.

### **The Data Sets**

The memory of the Holocaust uses me as a social category for explaining the Israeli political discourse in regards with the current crisis with Iran. I construct two data sets, in two analysis chapters, and, in consistency with the presented objectives of the thesis, I relate only to fragments of the texts that directly relate to the Iranian issue and to the social category of the collective memory of the Holocaust.

The first data set concentrates on the official political discourse as it is constructed by Israel's highest authority (Israel's Prime Minister). I will open in the first analysis chapter with an indepth analysis of three speeches by Israel's Prime Minister (PM).

The second data set describes the discursive tendency by three more influential politicians (Israel's opposition Leader; Israel's vice premier; and Israel's minister of foreign affairs). I will analyze in this chapter the stability of the discourse (as it was constructed by the PM) through the communication of those influential political figures.

## ***The Content***

Except of official Israeli internet sites, such as the PM official governmental site and the already presented MFA site, I will use the internet versions of two of the leading newspapers in Israel: *Yedioth Aharonoth* and *Haaretz*.

**Haaretz** is a privately daily newspaper in Israel that was founded in 1919. *Haaretz* newspaper is commonly regarded as “[s]ecular, liberal, pluralistic, and leftist in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” (Zertal 2005, p.218) and is “considered to be the Israeli intelligentsia’s newspaper” (218).

**Yedioth Aharonoth** is also privately owned newspaper (there is no state owned newspaper in Israel) that was founded in 1939. And unlike *Haaretz* (or at least the ‘image’ of *Haaretz* as *intelligentsia’s newspaper*) *Yedioth Aharonoth* is considered to be a nationalistic orientated newspaper that represents “populist attitudes” (Zertal 2005, p.222) in the Israeli public.

Fortunately, the ever more popular internet versions of those media institutions assist me, to a great extent, in terms of accessibility and in terms of language. Nearly all of the content, which is originally published in Hebrew (Heb.), is accessible in archives and in the English language (in the English versions of the newspapers internet sites). Thus, the translation issue is ‘objectivised’ to some degree, and to what it counts: as a native Hebrew speaker, I can verify that the content is well translated and not biased.

# 4 The Cultural Context of the Holocaust

## ***The Constitutive Legacy of the Holocaust Discourse***

*“The Holocaust and its millions of dead have been ever-present in Israel from the day of its establishment and the link between the two events remains indissoluble. The Holocaust has always been present in Israel's speech and silences; in the lives and nightmares of hundreds of thousands of survivors who have settled in Israel, and in the crying absence of the victims; in legislation, orations, ceremonies, courtrooms, schools, in the press, poetry, gravestone inscriptions, monuments, memorial books. Through a dialectical process of appropriation and exclusion, remembering and forgetting, Israeli society has defined itself in relation to the Holocaust”*

In accordance with the theorization of the cultural memory we can clearly see, as cited above (Zertal 2005, p.3), that the collective memory of the Holocaust is culturally embedded in Israel's societal practice, on its rituals, texts and images by which it interpret its past. I would like to concentrate here on a narrower and relevant field of research: the constitutive legacy of the Holocaust discourse and its traditional tendency to revive in periods of crises.

As an introduction to the constitutive legacies Holocaust discourses, which will be portrayed next by the two constituting discourses of the Holocaust in Israel, I would like to briefly present one of the most dominant institutional mechanism, used by the State of Israel, for constructing a Holocaust related common identity:

Israel's “Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Day” is an annual commemoration day that was formulated under a parliamentary law (1959)

and through a highly symbolic location in Israel's annual calendar<sup>15</sup> marks "the entire story of Israel's national rebirth, drawing on a potent combination of religious and national mythologies" (Zertal 2005, p.39). The Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Day constructs explicit narratives and discourses: "[o]n the one hand, it was meant to remind Jews in Israel and the Diaspora of the fate awaiting those who failed to choose the Zionist path. On the other, it was intended to emphasize the direct causal link between... physical heroism and taking up arms and the establishment of a Jewish state in Israel, a modern secular salvation, as it were, and a triumph over the history of the Diaspora" (Zertal 2005, pp.39-40) .

As portrayed above, the memory of the Holocaust is a *master commemorative narrative* in Israel. It is reinforced by the annual calendar and it marks Israel's emergence as an independent social entity vis-à-vis the defenceless legacy of the Diaspora Jews. In order to better understand the *fixed* cultural nature of such a narrative, and how it integrants in the state hegemonic discourse in circumstances of the extreme (periods of crises), I will briefly describe next two of the constituting Holocaust discourses in Israel: the legacy of the *power* and *renewal* narrative and the constitutive legacy of the Eichmann trial.

### **First Discourse: *Power and Renewal***

During the first years of Israel's state-building the state narrative was such of "power and renewal" (Zertal 2005 p.94) and the 300,000 refugees and survivors, that arrived to Israel (between 1945 and 1955) each with his or her experience from Nazi occupied Europe, received minimum support from the establishment to share their memories in the public sphere; they were 'forced' to join the narrative construction of the heroic "new Jew" while keeping their victimization hidden from the public eyes (pp.94-95).

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<sup>15</sup> The 30<sup>th</sup> of April (in Hebrew calendar: The 27 of Nissan) is located between *Passover* (an ancient Jewish religious feast that marks and symbolizes the Jewish exodus 'from slavery to freedom' (from ancient Egypt)), and the *Independence Day* (a secular modernist commemoration day that marks the establishment of Israel).



Such was the constitutive discourse of *power* and *renewal* in the first fifteen years of Israel's existence: on the one hand, the event of the Holocaust has been adapted instrumentally by "official Israel" as explicit evidence to the correctness of the core ideology of Zionism. The extermination of Europe Jewry became one of the legitimating arguments for national Jewish independence and a major argument in Israel's official propaganda concerning the Israeli-Arab conflict <sup>16</sup> (Shapira 1997, p.93). On the other hand, the absolute victimhood, as represented by the Holocaust, was presented by the discourse as the defeated legacy of the "old Jews" who went "like sheep to the slaughter"<sup>17</sup> (Yablonka 2001, p.247) and as a counter-metaphor to the constituting narrative of *power* and *renewal*; a narrative that was constructed by the mythological figure of the heroically "new Jew"<sup>18</sup>.

There is a structural paradox in the ability of Israel to construct victorious frame of *power* and *renewal* from a horrific defeat such as the Holocaust. Zertal's (2005, ch.1) interpretation of "the theory of death"<sup>19</sup> (p.26) may help to clarify the structural paradox of this discourse. The *theory of death* was a Zionist narrative (in the constituting years of state-building) and it presented two kinds of "deaths": a "beautiful death" (p.26) and a death "which is in no way beautiful" (p.26). The Jewish uprising against the Nazis in ghetto Warsaw<sup>20</sup> was described as a heroic *beautiful death*, by the Zionist establishment, and has been paralyzed to the Zionist

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<sup>16</sup> The discourse linked between Nazism and anti-Zionist Arabic propaganda.

<sup>17</sup> The expression "went like sheep to the slaughter" is a commonly accusation, in Israel, in the constituting years of "power and renewal", that was used in order to describe the millions of dead of the ghettos and concentration camps who did not chose the path of resistance (Yablonka 2001, pp.247-257).

<sup>18</sup> The conception of the "new Jew" was shaped as a result of European Zionists frustration from the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe; a frustration that led to the core Zionists ideology concerning the right of self determination for Jews (Shapira 1997, p.155). It began as a metaphorical symbol in the popular culture of Zionist literature and poetry and quickly enough became a lading ideological and political conception (pp.158-175). In the years of state-building it associated with the 'rough' metaphorical image of the native Israeli (the "Saber"); took part in the narrative of "power and renewal"; and was presented as an antithesis to the exilic "old Jew" of the Diaspora, which suffered the consequences of Auschwitz.

<sup>19</sup> The "theory of death" is a manifest that was written in May 20, 1943 by Yitzhak Lufban in *Ha'poel Ha'tzir* (a hegemonic Zionist newspaper in Palestine).

<sup>20</sup> The Warsaw uprising is described as a "huge, enormously portentous event... the most extensive and important Jewish military endeavor, and the first mass rebellion in any of the occupied countries, in fact the largest direct rebellion in the annals of Nazi dominion" (Zertal 2005, p.27).

struggle in Palestine: “[w]e fought here and they fought there” (p.26) (as referred to by the Palmach<sup>21</sup> commander Yitzhak Sadeh). The rebels have been coded as the Zionist Jews of the Diaspora in contrast to the Diaspora “old Jews”, which were coded as those who went “like sheep to the slaughter” (pp. 25-38). In other words, the uncommon historical event of a Jewish upraise against their Nazis perpetrators was instrumentalized as a Zionist narrative and became a myth.

In more general terms, the concept of “victim-community” (Zertal 2005, p.2) can help to explain a phenomenon in where an absolute defeat can be coded in a victorious frame. It is a sociocognitive theorization that is based on a structural paradox. The sociocognitive consciousness (from the term *victim-community*) is based on the humiliation of being a victim, however, paradoxically; “the victim is always both victim and victor, always destroyed but always reborn in a form that overcomes the victimizer” (Zertal 2005, p.2). Accordingly, the humiliation of the Holocaust was coded in the discourse of *power* and *renewal* as a source of heroically common destiny; from the ashes of defeat and humiliation the Zionist nationalistic movement was reborn presenting a new form of existence, a more dignity sense of existence that overcame and confronted the perpetrator (victimizer), and as will be seen, along the thesis, the perception of the perpetrator is traditionally being instrumentalized and coded, by the Israeli establishment, in relation to time and place and in relation to the legacy of the Holocaust.

In sum, the Holocaust used as a legitimized excuse for the establishment of the state of Israel, in both the internal and external political fronts (Shapira 1997, p.96), however, the personal memories of victimhood and the personal stories of horrors – of hundreds of thousands of survivors and refugees – were silenced by “official Israel”, and did not take place in the public discourse. Such was the Israeli discourse in its first years of existence all until the Eichmann trial.

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<sup>21</sup> The Palmach was a “[s]trike force within the Haganah, founded in 1941 in order to activate the organization’s profile and participate in the war effort against Nazi Germany... and thus became the symbol of the Jewish-Zionist new type of man/woman” (Zertal 2005, p.221).

## **Second Discourse: the *Eichmann* Legacy**

The dominant Israeli leader (Ben-Gurion), which share responsibility for the cynical political instrumentalization of the memory of the Holocaust (as briefly presented above), is the same person who is responsible<sup>22</sup> for the prosecuting of Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961<sup>23</sup>; a trial that is commonly described as the most crucial event in the construction of the Holocaust as the uniting myth of Israel's identity (Levy & Sznajder 2002; Segev 1993; Shapira 1997; Shapira 2007; Yablonka 2001; Zertal 2005).

As described by Segev (1993, pp.327) many saw the kidnapping, prosecuting and execution of Eichmann as a victory in Israel's existential struggle, and indeed; Ben-Gurion himself presented the trial (in interviews and public appearances during the year of the trial) as a triumph to Israel's sovereignty, since it is not Eichmann the 'person' that is standing to trial but the all episode of the Holocaust, and it is standing to trial in Jerusalem. Moreover, the objectives of the trial (according to Ben-Gurion) were first of all, to remind the international community that the Holocaust is obligating them to support the only Jewish state on the face of this earth. And secondly, the presentation of the Holocaust horrors, through the trial, meant to insert the memory of the Holocaust in Jewish youth and in the oriental Jews (who did not experience the Holocaust).

Along the thesis I will tend to focus on Ben-Gurion's first objective of the trial; the tendency to justify Israel's relevant power with an appeal to the world conscience; an 'appeal' that was mobilized through a sense of 'blame' to the 'beaten conscience of the world'. According to Yablonka (2001, p.255), supported with the horrifying testimonies of Holocaust survivors, the indictment of the Israeli court of law (in the Eichmann trial) was directed not only against Nazi Germany but against occupied Europe, as a whole, and against the rest of the

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<sup>22</sup> Ben-Gurion was described as the "architect, director, and stage manager" (Zertal 2005, p.96) of the trial.

<sup>23</sup> Eichmann was a high rank SS officer that was kidnapped by Israeli Mossad agents, from his place of hide in Argentina, and prosecuted, in Israel, as one of the master minds of the "final solution" (Segev 1993, p. 324).

international community. Not only that they did not try to save the Jews they even disrupt and sabotage rescue attempts, initiated by Zionist organizations. Evidently, Ben-Gurion repeatedly blamed France, Great-Britain and U.S. for not saving Jews. While doing so, Israel' PM associated the annihilation of Jews with the passive resistance of the world to those massive acts of ethnic cleansing (Yablonka 2001, p.256).

Zertal (2005) theorized the trial as a “consciousness-changing event” (p.95). The personal traumatic memories of the Holocaust survivors (the absolute victimhood) were brought up to the public sphere through their public testimonies<sup>24</sup> and, for the first time (fourteen years after the Holocaust), integrated in the Israeli collective memory. However, following the legacy of the constitutive narrative of *power* and *renewal*, the testimonies of absolute victimhood were indeed communicated, but, they were presented from a “position of power, sovereignty, and control” (p.95). The constitutive narrative was now as followed: “[t]he total helplessness of European Jewry in World War II could now directly serve as the “counter metaphor” to the discourse of Israeli omnipotence and also as its ultimate justification” (p.95). The absolute victimhood of the Holocaust could now be integrated in the public discourse but, instrumentally, as Israel's ultimate justification.

As suggested, the trial of a high rank SS Nazi officer in Jerusalem introduced a new hegemonic discourse to the Israeli society. A discourse that can best be summarized by an editorial headline from a special edition of a leading newspaper that was published hours after the announcement of Eichmann's capture:

“Only the Jewish state can now defend Jewish blood”<sup>25</sup>. Zertal (2005) interpreted this content (and much more alike) and coherently concluded the “tone” of Israel's discourse during the year of the trial:

“[T]he Holocaust, along with its victims, was not to be remembered for itself but rather as a metaphor, a terrible, sublime lesson to Israeli

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<sup>24</sup> The trial was broadcasted live on national radio and was the centre of the public discourse.

<sup>25</sup> *Yedioth Aharonoth*. Cited from Zertal (2005, p.95).

youth and the world that Jewish blood would never be abandoned or defenseless again" (p.96).

In other words, the legacy of the Eichmann trial was that the victimhood of the Holocaust have to be constantly sublime, both domestically and internationally, but to be communicate and remembered from a position of power (Jewish blood would never be abandoned or defenseless again). As will be seen next this "tone" appears regularly in periods of crises.

### **Summary**

Both of the presented discourses, the constitutive narrative of *power* and *renewal* and the legacy of the Eichmann trial, selectively and instrumentally construct the memory of the Holocaust as to fit the frame of the "new Israeli". As described, in the purpose of creating the new type of Israel there is a need to erase the 'shame' of the "old Jew", which *went like sheep to the slaughter*. Nevertheless, the objective victimhood of the systematic extermination of Europe Jewry can well serve as a moralist argumentation for the right of Israel to exist. Therefore, the instrumental logic, as will be seen next, was not to erase the memory of the passive victim, but on the contrary; to construct both frames ("new Jew"/"old Jew") and to use them purposely for different objectives.

## ***The Revival of Holocaust-Related-Themes in Periods of Crises***

As presented in the methodological chapter, one of my main goals, in the discourse analysis, will be to point on a *historical continuity* and/or *overlapping* of discourses; in order to evaluate how the traditional revival of Holocaust-related-themes, in periods of crises, operates in the current crisis with Iran. Accordingly, I will describe next the traditional tendency of the Holocaust memory to reconstruct itself in contemporary *frame of reference*. It will also indicate on the cultural origin of the Holocaust, since; as presented in the theoretical chapter, the tendency of discourses to reconstruct themselves in contemporary terms indicates on their cultural nature.

I will base the next section on the very extensive book by Tom Segev - *The Seventh Million: the Israelis and the Holocaust* – which profoundly explored the decisive impact of the Holocaust on the identity, ideology, and politics of Israel. Segev's book will use me as the leading source of quotations.

### **1956: the Sinai Campaign**

In a flash attack by the Israeli army on Egypt's territory (the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza strip), which was coordinated with France and Britain that attacked the Suez Canal to the south, in order to protect their past colonial interests in the Suez Canal that was nationalized by Nasser, the Israeli army managed to occupy both the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza strip. The period prior to the campaign was characterized by constant attacks by Arabic militias on Israeli settlements, bordering to Egypt and Jordan; by Egyptian power maximization; and the mobilization of hostile rhetoric's towards Israel. Under this destructive atmosphere both the Israeli press and politicians "compared Nasser to Hitler in both articles and cartoons" (Segev 1993, p.297), and the war, which was led by French and Britain, was argued to prevent "Nasser from turning into the Hitler of the east" (*Maariv*, cited in Segev, p.297).

In response to international condemnation, for Israel's occupation of the Sinai peninsula and the Gaza strip, Holocaust-related-themes were used by Israeli politicians, and by the Israeli media, in order to "score debating points" (Segev 1993, p.297). I would like to illustrate the Israeli argumentation with a quote (by an Israeli politician) that, according to my interpretation, coherently represents the employment of what I regarded, in the section above, as Israel's 'appeal' to the world 'beaten conscience' in order to legitimates its 'right of self defence':

"A million and a half young people and children were slaughtered in broad daylight, and the world's conscience was not moved... But now that the Jews are gathered in to the State of Israel, the outside world cannot give its consent. Its conscience bothers it, apparently because they refuse to go to the slaughter, but defend themselves courageously" (Segev, p.297).

Evidently, the appeal and employment of the Holocaust memory to justify Israel's offensive did not score enough debating points. Both the U.S. and USSR threatened Israel with severe consequences if not retreating from the occupied Sinai Peninsula and Gaza strip. The threats erupted "deep existential anxiety" (Segev 1993, p.297) in Israel's political discourse: "I am a Jew of the Exile, and I am frightened. It will be outright extermination"; "It's death"; "It would have turned into a catastrophe for the State of Israel" (p.298). These sorts of statements were commonly used by Israeli politicians due to U.S. and USSR threats. In sum, following the crisis of 1956 *deep existential anxiety* spread among Israel's leadership; *deep existential anxiety* that, as described by Segev, intimately related to the catastrophic scope of the Holocaust.

### **1967: the Six-Day War**

The "waiting period"<sup>26</sup> was characterized by deep existential anxiety in the Israeli public, as well. The Arabs mobilized threats such as: "the U.S. Sixth Fleet were

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<sup>26</sup> Nasser's (Egyptian president) decisions, in mid-May 1967, to expel the UN force from the Israeli-Egyptian border in Gaza strip; to blockade the Strait of Tiran (blocking by it Israel's southern port (Eilat)); and to sign a defense agreement with Jordan (alongside the already tight military relation with Syria), were interpreted in Israel as the "waiting period"; a period of a few weeks of angst waiting to an 'unavoidable war'.

standing ready to evacuate Jews from Israel and predicted that those who remained would be slaughtered” (Segev 1993, p.389), those were constantly broadcast on Arab radio (in “bad Hebrew” (p.389)) and contributed to the already widespread consciousness in Israel that: “the Arabs were about to “exterminate Israel”” (p.389). From such a collective existential perception, it is not a surprise that, “many Israelis were floundering in desolation and hopelessness” (p.387). And under this destructive atmosphere, Holocaust-related-themes prospered and, literally, took over the national discourse.

Israel was waiting “for the next holocaust” (Segev 1993, p.389). “[N]ewspapers continually identified Nasser with Hitler” (p.390) and *collective agents*, such as the former chief of military intelligence, described in a leading Israeli newspaper (an article that was also distributed to the Israeli army) “the classic anti-Semitic elements in the religious and political thinking of the Arab countries, including references to the protocols of the *Learned Elders of Zion* and racist arguments drawn from Nazi ideology” (p.391). Associations from the “gas-chambers” appeared, due to the extensive coverage of Nasser’s employment of chemical warfare against Yemen (p.391), and, “[a]ll this stirred up old Holocaust anxieties” (p.391). The following quote, by a former parliament member and an eminent commentator in *Haaretz* newspaper, can illustrate the discursive existentialistic perception of reality, during the waiting period. A reality that was compared to the legacy of the Holocaust:

“What is at issue is the existence or nonexistence of the Jewish people. We must crush the machinations of the new Hitler at the outset, when it is still possible to crush them and survive. It is irresponsible folly not to believe what Nasser has been writing and saying for the last twelve years. Neither the world nor the Jews believed the sincerity of Hitler’s declarations. ... Nasser’s fundamental strategy is the same as Hitler’s” [it is crucial to add that this article was ‘backed’ by an already printed index of “comparable statements by Nasser and Hitler”] (p.391).

According to Segev (1993), the memory of the Holocaust was instrumentalized by *collective agents* who opposed any attempt “to defuse the crisis by any means



other than war” (p.390). Diplomatic initiatives, to defuse the crisis, “were compared with the Munich agreement forced on Czechoslovakia before World War II” (p.390). Evidently, the collective memory of the Holocaust revived and took over the Israeli discourse in the weeks before the war.

However, the optimal results of the war<sup>27</sup> (in pure military terms) logically contradicted the extermination-anxiety that spread in the Israeli collective. How can such contradiction be explained?

“The threat of “extermination” had not, then, been real. But the fear of it had been real, and fear is what Eshkol’s [Israel’s Prime-Minister at that time] opponents exploited. More than any other factor, fear had prompted the war – the same fear that had contributed to ... the Dimona project [Israel’s nuclear program]. Its roots lay in the Holocaust.” (Segev 1993, p.392)

In other words, due to the past experience of the Holocaust, which constituted fear of group extermination in the Israeli sense of common identity, some antagonists, who knew better than the general public the ‘real’ relations of power in the region, instrumentalized this sort of existential fears for political mobilization.

In conclusion, to this point, the Eichmann trial and the six-day war (along with the presented Sinai war) represents the reconstruction of the Holocaust memory as a leading cultural memory in the Israeli society, and as an active agent in Israel’s discourse concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. As interpreted by Zertal (2005, Ch.3), the 1967 war was an application of the Holocaust discourse that has been constructed along the Eichmann trial (1960-1962); a traumatic memory of defeat (the Holocaust) that used as the ultimate justification to Israel’s position of *power, sovereignty, and control*. In other words, the memory of the Holocaust reconstructed itself in contemporary *frame of reference* and, as coherently argued by Levy & Sznaider (2002):

“It [the Holocaust] became a symbol for existential fears and the necessity to construct and maintain a strong military state. It was transformed into one

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<sup>27</sup> The conquest of the “Gaza Strip, the Sinai peninsula, the West Bank together with East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights” (p.391) in a flash war of six days.

more example of the archetypical Jewish story, one more instance where the enemies of the Jewish people tried to exterminate them and did not quite succeed. As such, it was mapped onto the Arab/Israeli conflict and has remained there ever since.” (p.96)

### **1969-1973: the Aftermath of 1967; the War of Attrition and Terrorism**

The Egyptian never really accepted the 1967 occupation of the Sinai Peninsula and between 1969 and 1970 strategically shelled the Israeli military posts along the Suez Canal in what can be described as a small scale war or war of attrition. This war was minimally covered by the Israeli media and almost kept nameless. In accordance, the existential perception of fear of group extinction did not appear in the public discourse.

However, following the geo-politic reality of post 1967 those were the ‘prosperous’ years of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which escalated its struggle<sup>28</sup> internationally, and in relation to my line of interest two terrorist events, out of many, were most associated to “the Nazi murder of the Jews” (Segev 1993, p.393). The September 1972 kidnapping and executing of the Israeli Olympic team, in the summer Olympics games in Munich (mostly referred to as the “Munich massacre”), and the September 1973 attack on a passenger train transporting Russian Jews from the Soviet Union to a transit camp in Austria. Both incidents were direct assaults on Israeli symbols (Israel’s support of the Diaspora and an official national Olympic team) and ironically took place in Austria and Germany. Consequently, those two events were associated and linked with the memory of the Holocaust in the Israeli discourse.

### **1973: the Yom-Kippur war**

The fasting of Yom-Kippur is probably the most accounted Jewish custom. Most symbolically, a day before this ancient commemorative day (in the Jewish annual calendar), October 5, 1973, Israel was attacked by the regular armies of Egypt and Syria. It was a surprise attack that cost dearly to the Israeli army. At some point, in

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<sup>28</sup> Described by Segev (1993) as a “terror campaign” (p.393).

the first days of the war, it seemed that Israel was on the path of defeat. It is described by Segev (1993) as an “earthquake” that “shook the very foundations of Israel: it spread fear among the decision makers and undermined the morale of the nation” (p.393). And consequently, in a repetitive tendency, “the spectre of the Holocaust again stalked the land” (p.393). Accordingly, the consequences of this war are described as a “blow to the nation’s sense of identity” (Segev 1993, p.394):

Israel as the ‘safe-haven’ for Jews was now officially vulnerable. As quoted by an Israeli Col.:

“[T]he whole monolithic system we had brought with us from school-anti-Semitism—Zionism- security- was cracked.” (p.394)

In sum, if until the Yom-Kippur war the hegemonic discourse was of “*Holocaust and heroism*” (Segev 1993, p.395) then the post war discourse of 1973 was of vulnerability; realizing the “meaning of the Holocaust and the limitations of heroism” (p.395).

### **1981: Israel’s Attack on an Iraqi Nuclear Facility**

The destruction of Iraq’s nuclear facility by the Israeli air-force was justified by Israel’s PM (Begin), in an interview to a foreign newspaper, in direct relation to the Holocaust:

“We must protect our nation, a million and a half of whose children were murdered by the Nazis in the gas chambers.” (Segev 1993, p.399)

In the same communicated remark the PM argued that an attempt by Iraq to rebuild its nuclear program will be followed by the same Israeli response.

Concerning the leading conservative (right-wing) politician, Menachem Begin, it is crucial to add that he is regarded by Segev (1993) as “[t]he great popularizer of the Holocaust... A master of the symbolic historical gesture, [that] missed no opportunity to exploit the Holocaust in debating his political opponents and in creating his own political image” (pp.397-98).

## 1982-1984: Lebanon War

The *master of the symbolic historical gesture* (Begin), that ordered the attack on the Iraqi nuclear facility, justifying it by the Jewish experience in the Holocaust, is the same PM, that ordered the invasion of Lebanon, in order to drive out of Lebanon the PLO, comparing it (the PLO) to Nazism, and justifying the action with the memory of the Holocaust (Segev 1993, p.399). As an indication, the Israeli PM justified the invasion to his cabinet as Followed:

"Such is our fate in Israel. There is no way other than to fight selflessly. Believe me, the alternative is Treblinka [a Nazi concentration camp], and we have decided that there will be no more Treblinkas." (p.399)

Moreover, in face of the international criticism to the invasion the PM tried to win debating scores with the same tendency of his formers: an 'appeal' of blame to the 'beaten conscious' of the international community:

\* "No one, anywhere in the world, can preach morality to our people."

\* Relating to an English newspaper (*London Times*) that criticized the invasion:

"A newspaper that supported the treachery of the Munich agreement should be very careful in preaching morality to a small nation fighting for its life. Had we listened to it we would no longer exist." (p.399)

\* The content of a letter that was sent to U.S. President Reagan, after the demolition of Arafat's (PLO leader) headquarters in Beirut, was titled in a *Yediot Aharonot* as followed:

"Begin to Reagan: I Feel like I Have Sent the Army into Berlin to Destroy Hitler in His Bunker." (p.570)

Apparently, also in the 80's (approximately forty years after the event of the Holocaust) "[t]he Holocaust was inevitably dragged into the political debater" (Segev 1993, p.400). However, in the early 80's the Israeli public did not take the narrative of power and renewal for granted and the discourse has been influenced also by less belligerent themes (Shapira 2007, p.138). Unlike previous wars, that were characterized by hegemonic Holocaust discourses of redemption, the

Lebanon war “divided the country deeply” (p.400), and a counter Holocaust-related-discourse appeared:

“Hitler is already dead, Mr. Prime Minister” (Segev 1993, p.400), wrote an elite Israeli author (Amos Oz) in a reaction to Begin’s instrumentalization of the memory of the Holocaust. Yeshayahu Leibowitz (an Israeli philosopher) referred to the Lebanon war in terms of a “Judeo-Nazi policy” (p.401); and, a Holocaust survivor protested against the war and the instrumentalization of the Holocaust memory in order to justify it with a hunger strike in the gates of the Yad Vashem museum (Israel’s Holocaust commemoration site).

Those are just few examples for illustrating the ‘tone’ of the counter-discourse and to illustrate the enthusiastic mobilization of Holocaust-related-themes, in contemporary *frame of reference*, by both sides of the political spectrum.

### **1990-1991: the Persian Gulf War**

Same like Nasser and Arafat also Saddam Hussein “was compared to Hitler” (Segev 1993, p.505). In this crisis it was common to assume that chemical weaponry will be used against the State of Israel. The millions of citizens of Israel all received gas masks and instructions of how to protect themselves against chemical attacks, in a campaign carried out by the Israeli army. The “chemical threat” resulted with “a return of the feeling before the Six-Day War” (p.505) and in line with the tendency of previous wars: “this one too brought the Holocaust to the forefront of public consciousness” (p.505).

However, unlike previous wars, where Israelis experienced the horrors of war as soldieries in the front or citizens in public shelters, this war was experienced in the private homes of the citizens “each person for himself and his family, in his sealed room, isolated within his gas mask... huddled together [those who did not flee] helplessly expecting the worst” (Segev 1993, p.506-7). This intimate, but yet collective experience, was described by Segev in a sentence (the concluding

sentence for the whole book) that I would like to highlight separately, due to its poetic interpretation of the reality.

***“Never before had so many Israelis shared so Jewish an experience”***

The traditional experience of the Diaspora Jews, to depend on the mercies of their hosts, was experienced, in 1992, not in the Diaspora but in the Jewish homeland.

## **Summary**

As was illustrated in the brief review of the Israeli discourse in periods of crises, the memory of the Holocaust was communicated by *collective agents* that through emotional appeal (*speech act theory*) and reconstructed the trauma claim of the Holocaust in contemporary *frame of reference*. The metaphor of the Holocaust was traditionally communicated by *collective agents*; it was communicated with a *fixed* cultural formation; and it appealed to society's *web of meaning*.

It was the harsh American and Soviet criticism on Israel's occupation of Sinai and Gaza, in 1954, that spread Holocaust anxieties in the Israeli discourse. In 1967, the anticipation to war, in the “waiting period”, constructed acute Holocaust anxieties in the Israeli discourse; existential discourse that later transformed into euphoria, in a sweep military victory; a transformation of emotions from desolation to spiritual-elevation that both related to the memory of the Holocaust. As an illustration, I would like to present a statement by Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor and Nobel peace prize awarded (1986), in the midst of euphoria:

“[T]housand years of suffering, expectations, and hope were *mobilized in the battle*, as well as the *millions of Holocaust victims*. As clouds of fire they came and protected their inheritors... The enemy lost the war also because of the Holocaust, that is, because of some expressions he employed. Not knowing that there are words that cannot be expressed in our generation, in regard to the Jewish people.” (Zertal 2005, p.114)

The post six-day-war euphoria was short coming and was followed, six years later, in the nearly defeat of the Yom Kippur war, with severe Holocaust anxieties. From then on, the Holocaust memory was instrumentalized to justify a surprise attack on Iraq's nuclear program; to justify a disputed invasion to Lebanon; and a

decade later, ‘genuine’ Holocaust anxieties erupted under the “chemical threat” from Iraq.

All together, it is of evidence that Holocaust-related-themes took a major part in the Israeli discourse in periods of crises. The collective memory of the Holocaust clearly reconstructed itself in contemporary *frame of reference* indicating on its cultural traumatic origin. Zertal (2005) referred to this evidential tendency as the “Nazification of the enemy” (p.174).

### ***The Sociocognitive Implication from Trauma***

As suggested by Milliken, in the methodological chapter, theoretical categories can be drawn from and help to interpret the empirical data. Due to my tendency to detect the *overlapping* characteristics of *historical continuity*, in the discourse, *abstraction* will be of major importance for revealing such tendencies, and for better describing the social category of the collective memory of the Holocaust as a social phenomenon domestically in Israel.

It is argued that every modern state tends to instrumentalize its collective memory in order to match it with the national narrative (Zertal 2005, p.59). The memory of the Holocaust is argued to play a crucial role in this respect. Zertal (2005) touched upon this sensitive social category and interpreted “the way in which Israel's collective memory of death and trauma was created and produced, and how it has been processed, coded, and put to use in Israel's public space” (p.1). She concluded that the memory of the Holocaust is being employed, by Israeli *collective agents*, as an instrument for the creation of a collective identity, and she defined it in the framework of “the politics of death in the service of the nation” (p.1). Consequently, when a society defines itself in relation to an existentialist memory, such as the Holocaust; when traumatic anxieties, as portrayed by the memory of the Holocaust, are being used as an agent for the construction of collective memory, cognitive implications must be followed. In other words, the extensive use of Holocaust-related-themes, as shown above, must

have some emotional affect on the Israeli society. Indeed, Zertal (2005) regards the collective emotional effect to such an extent as to define the Israeli society as driven by “culture of death” (p.1).

Zertal’s theorization of “culture of death” relates to, and can be detected by, the representation of Holocaust-related-themes in the discourse. In order to point on more specific consistencies between theoretical categories and the actual discourse, I will concentrate in my interpretation, first and most on the presented tendency (in the Israeli political discourse) to ‘appeal’ to the international community conscious for the justification of its sovereignty and relevant power. Secondly, I will borrow theoretical categories that were presented to describe the two constituting Holocaust discourses. From the constitutive legacy of *power and renewal* I will use theories such as *New Jews Old Jews*, the *theory of death*, and the structural paradox of the *victim-community*. And from the constitutive legacy of the Eichmann trial, I will try to identify the habitual tendency to communicate the victimhood of the Holocaust from a position of *power, sovereignty, and control*. Thirdly, a crucial theory for my interpretation will be the sociocognitive characterization of the Israeli society in terms of “siege mentality” (Bar – Tal & Teichman 2005). According to Bar – Tal and Teichman’s (2005; *Stereotypes and Prejudice in Conflict*), the course of the Arab-Jewish conflict is the main “contextual factor in the evolvement of Israel’s negative intergroup psychological repertoire about Arabs” (p.92). However, the historical event of the Holocaust, which is described as the climax of an ancient history of “persecution, libel, social taxation, restriction, forced conversion, expulsion, and pogroms” (p.96), has major sociocognitive implication on the Israeli Jewish society; a society that is theorized by the writers in terms of *siege mentality* (pp.92-96).

The sociocognitive implications of the *siege mentality* can be described by a “pessimistic world view: [when] nothing good can be expected from the “rest of the world”” (Bar – Tal & Teichman 2005, p.97). Such cognitive perception is characterized, domestically in Israel, with the collective ethos that the Jewish



society stands alone in a hostile world; a pessimistic world view that views the nations of the world as “evil, immoral, utilitarian, indifferent, and often brutal” (p.97).

Rooted in the long term history of the Diaspora, and the short term history of Israel, is sociocognitive emotional perceptions that results with deep mistrust about the world intentions. Consequently, the writers described Israeli Jews as highly sensitive to information; information that come from the outside world, and is usually presented as evidence for reaffirming the already constitutive perception of the negative intentions of the world (Bar – Tal & Teichman 2005, pp.97-98).

Finally, Bar-Tal (1998) presented eight themes for describing the societal beliefs of a society that is coping with *intractable conflict* (such as the Israeli society): the justness of one's own goals, societal beliefs about security, adversary's delegitimization, positive self image, own victimization, patriotism, unity, and own wish for peace. Those themes are usually “incorporated into the ethos and are reflected in the group's language, stereotypes, images, myths and collective memories” (p.8), and are of such sociocognitive influence as to “contribute to the solidification of social identity” (p.8). I would like to use those theoretic categories instrumentally and to interpret how they are reflected in the Israeli political discourse concerning Iran.

## **Summary**

In my view, pessimism is the collective common sense for a nation who experienced the horrors of the abyss. In order to tackle this perception I chose to use the collective memory of the Holocaust, as a social category, and to explore its revival and reconstruction in relation to the “Iranian threat”. My assumption is that Iran’s maximization of power and its hostile rhetoric’s against Israel’s most intimate sense of identity (Zionism and Holocaust) are communicated in Israel as evidence for the negative intentions of the world, reaffirming, in return (in

contemporary terms), Zertal's perception of Israel as a society which is driven by *culture of death*.

Consequently, I presented above theoretical categories that might account to Israel's sociocognitive perception in the current crisis with Iran. Theoretical categories, that are rooted in Israel's two constitutive Holocaust discourses; eight themes that can help in describing Israel's societal beliefs under an intractable conflict; Israel's mentality of siege; and a theoretical assumption concerning the traditional tendency of Israel to 'appeal' to the international community conscious for justifying its sovereignty and relevant power, those theories will be abstracted and used in different dosages for interpreting the assumed *overlapping* of the *collective memory of death and trauma* in the contemporary crisis with Iran.

## 5 Israel's Highest Authority Codification of the "Iranian Threat"

The contextualization of the constitutive legacy of the Holocaust in the Israeli sense of collectively, the visualization of the traditional revival of Holocaust-related-themes in periods of crises, and the theoretical account concerning the sociocognitive implications of collective trauma, domestically in Israel, were all presented in the previous chapter and will use me next - through the methodological tool of *abstraction of theory* – for the interpretation of the instrumental logic of the memory of the Holocaust; the interpretation of the stability of the discourse; and for implying concerning the sociocognitive implications that such a memory might have on Israel's behavior in the international realm (specify here by Israel's communication).

Following Alexander (2004) theorization of the *speech act theory*, which suggests that *collective agents* tend to construct and codify understanding of the 'real world' in a way that will fit already existing cultural meanings, I seek to detect how Israel's PM constructs his meaning in relation to the Iranian issue. Leading metaphors, that repeatedly appear in the content, and can be therefore represented as hegemonic discourses with *fix dominant meanings*, will be explored, and the narrative approach, which calls to linguistically interpret rhetoric's as "cultural stories" (Silverman 2003, p.345), will guide me in order to describe if and how Israel's PM uses, in his speeches, cultural stories that fit the available and familiar narratives of the society.

All together, I seek to point on the *overlapping* of Holocaust discourses, in the current crisis with Iran, pointing on the assumingly cultural traumatic nature of the collective memory of the Holocaust in Israel; its tendency to revive in

contemporary *frame of reference*. In more general terms, I seek to imply concerning the destructive influence that ‘identity issues’ might play in the communication of hostile actors. How hostile identities might escalate an already escalated SD and how hostile myths might stimulate *fear of group extinction* in the incited state.

For the purpose of describing and interpreting such themes in the Israeli discourse I chose to open with three highly symbolic and mobilized (through the Israeli media) speeches by Israel’s highest authority: Israel’s PM. The first speech was given at a Holocaust memorial site in Berlin Germany; the second was given in an event at Israel’s Holocaust commemoration centre: Yad-Vashem; and the third in the U.S. in front of the utmost representative and influential body of the Diaspora: the annual General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities. Hopefully, the symbolic magnitude of the events will be in help for describing how the collective memory of the Holocaust; a hegemonic narrative with *fix dominant meanings* in Israel’s “area of objectivised culture” (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995, p.127), is communicated by Israel’s highest authority.

### ***Israel’s Prime Minister in Germany***

The first content is from a speech that was given by Israel’s PM (Ehud Olmert) in a highly symbolic event, which took place at a highly symbolic frame of time. Accompany by German’s Chancellor (Angela Merkel) Israel’s PM mobilized a Holocaust thematic speech, at a Memorial Ceremony at the Grünwald train station in Berlin<sup>29</sup>, as most symbolically - for my purpose - the speech was mobilized in the closing day of Iran’s two day “Holocaust convention” (December 12, 2006)<sup>30</sup>.

Expectedly, Holocaust related themes were repetitively communicated by Israel’s PM in an occasion that was held in a Holocaust commemoration site. However, the interpretation reveals that those themes were communicated

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<sup>29</sup> The same train station (platform) where about 60 thousand Jews made their way to Nazi death camps in Auschwitz, Dachau, and Theresienstadt.

<sup>30</sup> PM-office (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Archive/Speeches/2006/12/speechgru121206.htm>

instrumentally. They were mobilized in accordance with the traditional tendency to authenticate the established of the state of Israel as a new form of existence and a triumph over the history of the Diaspora, and as an ‘appeal’ to the world ‘beaten conscience’ (from the Holocaust), in order to emphasize the world ‘moral debt’ to ‘deal’ with contemporary threats to Israel’s existent.

All together, in accordance with the sociocognitive implications of the mentality of siege, Israel’s PM constructs the pessimistic realization that the Jewish people stand alone in a hostile world and following the experience of the Holocaust they should not rely on the mercy of strangers.

### **The Victimhood**

The total victimhood of the Diaspora Jews is poetically communicated by Israel’s PM:

“I stand here, in the name of the sovereign State of Israel ... hear a mixture of incomplete words, a suffocated cry, a child wailing, a mother pleading, an old man groaning. Above them bursts a screeching command – cold, cutting, brutal – and in the background an engine shrieking, a piercing screech, congested coaches slammed shut, sealing a cry of horror; and then the echo subsides in a metallic crunching of wheels speeding into the distance.”

Following the theorization of the “speech act theory” (Alexander 2004, 11) we can clearly witness, in this citation, a process in where a *collective agent* (in this case Israel’s PM) communicates with his/her audience (members of the *carrier group*) in a symbolic terminology, which most explicitly relates to a traumatic event of the past, in this case; the collective memory of the Holocaust.

The *suffocated cry*; the *child wailing*; the *mother pleading*; and the *old man groaning* are presented as the *echo* of a mixture of *incomplete words* of Jews as they are boarding the train at the Grünwald platform (approximately sixty years ago) on their way to annihilation. The victimhood is symbolized here by one platform out of many (across Europe) and is communicated *in the name of the sovereign State of Israel* (as highlighted by Israel’s PM in the opening sentence of the speech).

Evidently, in accordance with the constitutive legacy of the Eichmann trial, the victimhood of the Holocaust is communicated but it is communicated from the position of Israel's sovereignty and, as will be seen, from a position of relevant power.

### **The Renewal**

The traumatic memory of the Holocaust is being constructed, by Israel's PM, as a moralist legitimization for the establishment of the state of Israel. After poetically introducing the victimhood of Europe Jewry the PM makes the causal link between the defeat of the Diaspora and the establishment of Israel.

The extermination of the Diaspora is undoubtedly related to the fact that a Jewish "safe haven" did not exist at the time: "[t]hey [Europe Jewry] did not have these ["a safe haven"; "a harbour"; "a lighthouse"; "a sheltered home"] until the establishment of the State of Israel". The consequences of the Holocaust are presented as the result of not having a Jewish state; a Jewish state that, in line with the Zionist narrative, is described by Israel's PM as a "safe haven" for Jewish existence.

In accordance with the constitutive narrative of power and renewal the trauma of the Holocaust is adopted instrumentally as an explicit evidence for the correctness of the core ideology of Zionism (the establishment of a Jewish "lighthouse") and as a legitimating argument for Israel's existence.

Moreover, in line with the structural paradox of the victim community - where an absolute defeat tend to be coded in a victorious frame - it is of evidence that the victimhood of the Holocaust is not only communicated from the relatively powerful position of Israel's sovereignty it is also coded as a triumph over the perpetrator: 'we' - the victims - overcame the victimizer.

The Nazi regime has been thrown to the 'garbage of history' and the Jewish people carries on. Not only that the Nazi perpetrator did not succeed with its final solution the establishment of the State of Israel symbolizes the victory of the

victim over the victimizer. The “values of the Torah [Heb.: the old-testament] and the prophets of Israel” still exist. They exist ‘now’, in the formation of sovereignty state, and they are portrayed in a speech that is mobilized in Berlin, sixty years after the Holocaust, as a triumph over the perpetrator ideology. In other words, although that the victimizer did leave its legacy (“the legacy of our six million dead”) this legacy is memorized, by Israel’s PM, in a victorious frame: the *values of the Torah and the prophets of Israel* still exist – implying that the victim prevailed.

### **The World’s Conscience**

Like the traditional legacy of his predecessors also the current Israeli PM publicly communicates with the world’s conscience, and since the speech was given in Berlin - the previous capitol of the Nazi Reich - the ‘appeal’ to the world’s conscience increases symbolically.

After poetically presenting the victimhood of Europe Jewry in a victorious frame of renewal, the PM makes it clear that, the victimhood is not forgotten, on the contrary, the memory of the Holocaust “resurfaces again and again” and the ‘blame’ for the consequences of Holocaust (*the legacy of our six million dead*) is not directed against Germany alone, which “blocked” and “sealed” its roads (to prevent the Jews from escaping), the ‘blame’ is constructed by this Israeli PM, as well, on “all countries of the world”:

Even if “given the option of leaving this country [Germany]” the Jews had no sanctuary: “the shores of all countries of the world – were sealed and bolted to them”. Israel’s PM is publicly ‘appealing’ to the world’s conscience and rhetorically asks what they (*all countries of the world*) have done to unseal the roads? If not explicit enough the answer soon follows:

“There was only one road for those who had been forcibly herded at this station: the road heading east, from which there was no return.”

Evidently, the world conscience is a major theme in the PM communication. In this speech, the PM mobilizes one of the most instrumentalized lessons from the Holocaust (in Israel) that traditionally was used in periods of crises, in order to ‘appeal’ to the world conscious, and to score debating scores. The accountability for the Holocaust consequences (the annihilation of Europe’s Jewry) is traditionally presented in the Israeli discourse not only as a Nazi legacy but as a universal legacy of the world (*all countries of the world* - as articulated here). The many countries that cooperated with the Nazis; did not combat the Nazis; sealed their roads and ports from Jewish escape; or ‘just’ refused to accept Jewish refugees<sup>31</sup>, are all accountable to the consequences of the Holocaust (according to the conventional Israeli discourse).

Accordingly, much attention is given to the world conscience, and as will be visualized and interpreted next; the ‘appeal’ to the world conscience is constructed instrumentally, in order to justify Israel’s position in regards to contemporary threat: “those [meaning Iran] who threaten to eradicate them [the Jewish people]”.

### **The Legitimization of Power**

Following the mobilization of the absolute victimhood, as a justification for Israel’s establishment (a “sheltered home” for the Jews), comes a paragraph that can be interpret as a straight forward justification for Israel’s position of power.

The victimhood of the Holocaust is well communicated (*the road heading east, from which there was no return, and / or, the legacy of our six million dead*) and following the constitutive narrative of power and renewal it (the victimhood) is presented, by the PM, as the causal consequences of having no state (“Jews did not have a state then”).

Through the victimhood of Europe Jewry Israel’s current PM makes the logical argument that the State of Israel must be legitimized as a *safe haven* for Jewish

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<sup>31</sup> Most ‘sticking out’ are Great Britain that strategically abstracted much resources from its Navy (that was preoccupied in a World War), to seal the shores of Palestine, preventing Jewish refugees to escape Europe and in some cases turning them back to their destiny in Europe, and U.S., that used minimum recourses (if any) to assist Europe Diaspora.



existence and a triumph over the history of the Diaspora. From this construction of meaning the PM then mobilizes one of the most constitutive lessons from the Holocaust: never-again. He constructs it from a relative position of power and control (the position of a sovereignty state), and in contemporary frame of reference:

"We have learned and memorized the lesson: the weak and defenceless are doomed. Doomed are they who do not believe those who threaten to eradicate them. Doomed are they who remain complacent and do not prepare themselves to thwart the danger."

The constitutive narrative of never-again comes from the "consciousness-changing event" (Zertal 2005, p.95) of the Eichmann trial and is regarded as a 'slogan' for the most common narrative in Israel's Jewish society: Jewish blood would never be abandoned or defenseless again. It is well articulated here: *the weak and defenceless are doomed...Doomed are they who remain complacent and do not prepare themselves to thwart the danger*, and the message is clear and coherent:

Israel has *memorized the lesson* and will use any object in its power to *thwart the danger*. The *danger* is represented in contemporary frame of reference (*those who threaten* [in present time] *to eradicate them* [the Jewish people]) and, as will be seen later, it comes as a direct reference to the "Iranian threat".

Following the legacy of the Eichmann trial, the communication of the absolute victimhood (as represented by the Holocaust) is from a position of power and sovereignty, and in accordance with the traditional 'appeal' to the world conscious. Israel's current PM (Olmert) clearly communicates with the world conscious and does so to justify Israel's relevant power.

All together, right until now, following the sociological theoretical model of "cultural trauma" (Alexander 2004) we can clearly witness how the traumatic memory of the Holocaust (the *child wailing*; the *mother pleading*; and the *old man groaning*) is associated by the PM in contemporary "frame of reference" (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995, p.130).

### **Anxious led Mentality**

Bar – Tal & Teichman's (2005) classification of Israel in terms of siege mentality can be well authenticated by the PM speech, and strengthen the understanding of how sociocognitive implications, from the Jewish people grim past (represented here by the event of the Holocaust), influence the Israeli political discourse. After mobilizing the blame of the *legacy of our six million dead* (the "forcibly" Jewish exudes to a road *from which there was no return*) not only on "the Nazi evil" but on *all countries of the world*. Israel's highest authority articulated the following judgment:

"Doomed are they who entertain the false illusion that they could escape harm and that they could rely on the mercy of strangers."

The presented above reaffirms the classification of Israel in terms of siege mentality. The sociocognitive implications of siege mentality; pessimistic world view with deep mistrust about the world intentions, are clearly reaffirmed by the PM statement that anything else but *harm* is a *false illusion*. Secondly, the gloomy perception of standing alone in a hostile world is clearly visible from the unwillingness of Israel's PM to *rely on the mercy of strangers*; the same *strangers* that were presented earlier as those who purposely *sealed* their *shores* and *roads* leaving the Jewish people with *the legacy of... six million dead*.

All together, the characterization of Israel's mentality of siege, which is rooted in a traumatic legacy of helplessness and victimhood, is essential for the interpretation of Israel's position of power. Because, due to the legacy of the Holocaust the Jewish people has learned that they stand alone in a hostile world. This theorization is well articulated by Israel's PM (*Doomed are they who remain complacent and do not prepare themselves to thwart the danger*) and, in accordance with Kaufmann (2001) theorization of the "myth-symbol complex", we can see how he communicates through emotional expression, that is presented as a respond to the most emotionally symbol evoked. In this case, the emotional expression (by the PM) is stimulated by those who *threaten to eradicate* Israel.

### **Own Wish for Peace**

It seems that each of Bar-Tal's (1998) eight themes for describing the societal beliefs of a society that is coping with intractable conflict applies for the PM speech. The justness of one's own goals is represented by the *lesson* of the Holocaust. An absolute traumatic *lesson* that is being instrumentalized not only to construct Israel's own victimization (*the legacy of our six million dead*) but also in order to justify the societal beliefs about security (*We have learned and memorized the lesson: the weak and defenceless are doomed*). The adversary's delegitimization is constructed by presenting *those who threaten* (in present time) *to eradicate them* (the Jewish people) in association with the *Nazi evil*. The positive self image is constructed by terminology such as Israel's "social justice and human morality". Patriotism is represented by the presentation of Israel as "the object of their [the Jews] dreams, the land of their hopes and prayers", and the construction of unity can be illustrated by the PM's definition of the State of Israel in the archaic terms of the *eternal values of the Torah and the prophets of Israel*. Finally, the societal belief of own wish for peace is literately highlighted in the concluding sentence of the PM speech: "the legacy of our [Israel's] six million dead... the sanctity of life and the dedicated pursuit of peace".

In sum, we can witness above the sort of nature of norms and identities that are originated in Israel's domestic realm and their reconstruction by Israel's PM. And if indeed, as presented in the theoretical chapter, domestic level analysis influences the international realm, than, to my opinion, Israel's behaviour in the international arena depends also on the interpretation of its very hectic nature of norms and identities, as portrayed above by Israel's PM discursive tendency.

### **Relating the Metaphor of the Holocaust to Iran**

To my interpretation, the constitutive narrative of *power* and *renewal*; the legacy of the Eichmann trial; and the sociocognitive mentality of siege, are of clear evidence in the PM communication. It points on the representation of Holocaust-related-themes in contemporary frame of reference and, following the constitutive

legacy of Holocaust discourses, we can clearly see how the communication of the Holocaust victimhood is done from a position of power and sovereignty (the constitutive legacy of the Eichmann trial). The victimhood is presented as the legacy of the Diaspora, the consequences of having no state, and as the causal justification for a Jewish homeland (the constitutive narrative of power and renewal). Moreover, in accordance with the traditional tendency of his predecessors the PM communicates, as well, with the world conscious in order to justify Israel's use of power and/or build up of power, and during it all; pessimistic world view is of clear evidence.

However, although that the presented content visualizes the tendency to reconstruct the memory of the Holocaust, in contemporary frame of reference, it does not relate directly to Iran (except of one assumingly associated reference to Iran: *[d]oomed are they who do not believe those who threaten to eradicate them* (the Jewish people)). Nevertheless, the words of the PM can not be fully understood - in the context of the "Iranian threat" - without a description of a speech that followed in the same event, by the President of the Jewish Central Council in Germany (Charlotte Knobloch).

## Putting the Prime Minister Speech in Context; the Jewish Clerk Clarification

The coverage of the PM speech overlapped in the Israeli media (cited here from *Ynet.com*<sup>32</sup>) with Knobloch's speech, which followed the PM speech. Like Israel's PM, also Germany's highest representative of its prospering Jewish community legitimizes Israel's 'self defense' with the *lesson* of the Holocaust.

"Especially today, in times when Israel is subject to wicked dangers all around it [Israel]... needs to protect itself from all directions, we must never forget what it means to be defenceless."

The Jewish figure justifies Israel's sovereignty and its uses of power through the consequences of the Diaspora *defenceless* in the Holocaust. Israel, according to the figure, is *subject to wicked dangers... and needs to protect itself from all directions*. The contemporary security reality, of the sovereignty state of Israel, is instrumentally associated with the consequences of the Holocaust; justifying (according to this logic) Israel's build up of defensive/offensive capabilities.

The Jewish figure uses, in his speech, metaphors, that are rooted in the same constitutive narratives that are used by Israel's PM (as a reminder: *we [Israel] have learned and memorized the lesson: the weak and defenceless are doomed*). In accordance with the metaphorical and narrative approaches (as presented in the methodological chapters), we can clearly witness how both, Israel's PM and the Jewish clerk, using in their speeches leading metaphors that are rooted in the constitutive legacy of the Holocaust. Constitutive Holocaust narratives, that with their 'fix dominant meanings' can be interpreted as cultural stories that fit the available and familiar narratives of the society.

Nevertheless, the significance of the speech (to my purpose), of the Jewish figure, is by the fact that it places the PM speech in the context of the "Iranian threat", and relates the "Iranian threat" to the traumatic memory of the Holocaust. The Jewish figure 'reminds' us that:

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<sup>32</sup> Ynet.com, 12.12.06, Ronny Sofer; "*Olmert in Berlin: Weak, defenseless doomed*" (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3339140,00.html>

"[A]t these very moments a Holocaust denial conference is being held. At these very moments, a group of criminals sit together, denying the Holocaust, tarnishing the memory of its victims, calling for the eradication of Israel, and planning evil acts for the future."

The linkage to the "Iranian threat" is clearly articulated here (the *Holocaust denial conference* was held in Teheran). Accordingly, the same ones who currently threaten *to eradicate* the Jewish people, as presented by the PM (and assumingly associated to Iran), are given full context by the Jewish clerk (those who *sit* together [in Iran's capital], *denying the Holocaust, tarnishing the memory of its victims, calling for the eradication of Israel, and planning evil acts for the future*).

Moreover, the sentence that follows can most coherently visualize the perception of the memory of the Holocaust in terms of "cultural trauma", since it well articulates how the traumatic memory of the Holocaust tends to revive in periods of crises (in this case the Iranian crisis):

***"We can never again allow the existence of platform 17 – a platform leading to death."***

## ***Israel's Prime Minister in Yad-Vashem***

In October 27, 2006, approximately six weeks before the Grünwald speech, a speech<sup>33</sup> was given by the same Israeli PM (Olmert) in a ceremony at Israel's official Holocaust commemoration site in Jerusalem: Yad-Vashem<sup>34</sup>. Also here, an official speech, by a representative figure, at a symbolic event of unveiling donor's plaque at Yad-Vashem, will obviously concentrate on the need to reconstruct the memory of the Holocaust for next generations. After all, the purpose of the donation and the purpose of Yad-Vashem are both aimed on the remembrance of the Holocaust. And indeed, Israel's PM does argue for the need to learn the lessons of the Holocaust.

However, although the nature of the event, which most naturally stimulates Holocaust themes, the importance of the speech (for my purpose) is that the memory of the Holocaust is instrumentalized by the PM, in contemporary frame of reference, indicating on the traumatic cultural nature of the Holocaust domestically in Israel.

### **Contemporary Frame of Reference**

Already in the beginning of the speech the historic event of the Holocaust is framed in contemporary frame of reference; indicating on the cultural nature of the collective memory of the Holocaust, and validating my assumption concerning the traumatic nature of the Holocaust in Israel. The memory of the Holocaust, according to Israel's PM, is "not only a lesson in history, but a very important preparation for what we yet have at present, and may have to deal with in the future". To better link the Holocaust representations (in the PM construction of meaning) to the Iranian issue the requested question should then be: what sort of

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<sup>33</sup> PM-office (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Archive/Speeches/2006/10/speechyadvashem271006.htm>

<sup>34</sup> Israel's official Holocaust commemoration site in Jerusalem, where every high-rank foreign representative (in an official visit to Israel) is 'obligated' to visit, exhibits, by large, the victimhood of the Holocaust, but in line with the constitutive narrative of *power* and *renewal* constructs also the "beautiful death" of the "new Jew" in their revolt against their Nazi perpetrators (most representative by the Warsaw uprising) and concludes with an exhibition of the Jewish revival: the establishment of the state of Israel.

*present* or *future* threat is paralyzed, by Israel's PM, to the most apocalyptic event of the Holocaust?

Correlating to my assumption - concerning the revival of Holocaust-related-themes in the current crisis with Iran - Israel's PM coherently associates the apocalyptic event of the Holocaust with the "Iranian threat":

"[H]ow so many people could hear what was said, but did nothing. How could the world hear the incitement by the Nazi Regime in Germany, and somehow keep on living as if it was not real... These very days, we hear similar voices. It is the first time that a leader of a very big and important nation openly and publicly declares that the aim of his nation is to wipe the existence of the State of Israel off the map."

Referring to Iran's president, Ahmadinejad, Israel's PM, Olmert, paralyzes the historical *incitement by the Nazi Regime* to Iran's calls *to wipe the existence of the State of Israel off the map*. Furthermore, in accordance with Kaufmann's (2001) theorization that hostile attitudes, in a hostile SD, might stimulate fear of group extinction, and with the presented interpretive constructivist perception that materialistic patterns of behaviour might be associated with identity-related issues, we can see next how Iran's communicated aspiration - *to wipe the existence of the State of Israel off the map* - is constructed by Israel's PM in materialistic terms, and as a realistic threat to Israel's existence:

"Not only is he saying these things [wiping Israel off the map], but, as we all know, he is making enormous efforts to possess of non-conventional weapons, with delivery systems that may implement – that have the capacity of implementing that which he foresees for the future of the State of Israel and the Jewish people."

The *enormous efforts to possess of non-conventional weapons* are a reference to Iran's "nuclear threat". The *delivery systems* are a reference to Iran's advancing missile program<sup>35</sup>. And all Together, the "nuclear threat", combining with a *delivery system*, is presented as a realistic threat to Israel's existence; nuclear warheads

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<sup>35</sup> See on Iran's delivery capabilities: a document by CSIS; "*Iran's Nuclear Weapons? Iran's Missiles and Possible Delivery System's*" (accessed: 03.06.2008) [online]. URL - [http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/060417\\_irandelivsystem.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/060417_irandelivsystem.pdf)



that, according to Israel's PM, *have the capacity of implementing that which he [Ahmadinejad] foresees for the future of the State of Israel and the Jewish people [to wipe the existence of the State of Israel off the map]*.

Iran's incitement is being coded by "official Israel" (represented here by Israel's PM) in materialistic means and as a realistic alternative; a codification of the "Iranian threat" in both materialistic and identity means that associates Iran's nuclear program with Iran's communicated aspiration (*to wipe the existence of the State of Israel off the map*). As a result, Iran is presented, in Israel, as "existential threat"; an existential threat that tends to be associated with no less than the traumatic event of the Holocaust.

### **Siege Mentality**

As we saw above, the reconstruction of the memory of the Holocaust, in contemporary frame of reference, is done, by Israel's PM, in such a hectic way that might point on a genuine pessimistic world view, or, on the other hand, on a political interest to manipulate a threat for political mobilization. Those can be only assumed, but, whatever the reason might be, it is of evidence that Israel's PM is mobilizing a very specific codification of the "Iranian threat". He codifies the "Iranian threat" in terms of a realistic "existential threat"; a pessimistic world view that might be accounted for in terms of siege mentality.

Not only that the PM reconstructs the collective memory of the Holocaust in contemporary frame of reference (*as a very important preparation for what we yet have at present, and may have to deal with in the future*) the contemporary threat is exemplified, by the PM, in terms of 'real – materialistic – capabilities' (a "nuclear threat"). If not explicit enough, the acute of the contemporary "existential threat" (as constructed by Israel's PM) and its parallelization with the memory of the Holocaust, the next presented quote should clarify it all:

"Learning about the Holocaust is not learning of remote history – of what happened to the Jewish people. On these very days, we hear voices which echo those which started straight across the world in the '30s."

In two sentences, Israel's PM most coherently articulates the revival of Holocaust-related-themes in contemporary terms. The PM paralyzes the *voices which echo* in present days, from Teheran, to those which *echo*[ed], from Europe, in the '30s (Nazi ideology). Such equalization - which is accompanied with coherent visualization of the contemporary threat from Iran through probabilistic materialistic capabilities (*non-conventional weapons, with delivery systems*) - might clearly indicate on a very pessimistic world view.

Moreover, high sensitivity to information is another sociocognitive characterization of the mentality of siege that can be helpful for interpreting the context of the speech. As presented, information that comes from the outside world might be presented as evidence for reaffirming the already constitutive perception of the negative intentions of the world. Indeed, the discourse is being used not only as evidence for reaffirming the already constitutive perception of the negative intentions of Iran, but, as evidence for reaffirming the constitutive perception of the negative intentions of the *world*; a constitutive perception of 'blame' that, following the traditional tendency of his predecessors, is being instrumentalized as an 'appeal' to the world conscience.

### **Appeal of Blame to the World Conscience**

The historical *world* 'ignores' from the Nazi communicated incitement is associated to today's 'ignores' to Iran's communicated incitement. According to Israel's PM, we experience today the *similar voices* of incitement (as mobilized *by the Nazi Regime*) and, in a repetitive cycle of history, we witness the similar ignores by the *world*.

A more instrumentalize mobilization of 'blame', to the *world* conscience, soon follows:

"[T]his nation [Iran] continues to be a legitimate member of the United Nations, and leaders of many countries in the world receive the leader that speaks publicly, officially and openly about the liquidation of the State of Israel, and they hardly do anything."

The instrumental logic behind the mobilization of ‘blame’ to the world conscience can be well assumed from the quotation above. Israel’s PM coherently calls to illegitimatize Iran’s membership at the United Nations; to boycott Iran; and to ‘act’ against the contemporary threat to Jewish existent (as represented here by Iran).

### **Giving-Up on the World Conscience**

A pessimistic world view is well visualized by the PM parallelization of the “Iranian threat” with the apocalyptic event of the Holocaust, and his interpretation of the international community reaction (*they [leaders of many countries in the world] hardly do anything*).

The realization that nothing good can be expected from the ‘rest of the world’ is the common Israeli perception of the nations of the world (Bar – Tal & Teichman 2005, p.97); nations that, due to their bureaucratic and administrative assistance to transport their Jewish communities to their destiny in the *east* (the concentration camps), are commonly presented in Israel as “evil, immoral, utilitarian, indifferent, and often brutal” (p.97). Such post-traumatic sociocognitive beliefs are explained by the theorization of the siege mentality; a mentality of siege that constructs deep mistrust of the world intentions. Deep mistrust that can be well interpreted in the current speech:

Most countries heard *the incitement by the Nazi Regime* and did not do anything and now; when *similar voices* are raising again (this time from Iran), the inciting country (Iran) *continues to be a legitimate member of the United Nations* and *leaders of many countries in the world... hardly do anything*.

Such pessimistic construction of meaning, by Israel’s highest authority, might construct the apprehension (domestically in Israel) that Israel will stay alone in front of a hostile regional power (Iran), which introduces, according to the Israeli political discourse, new pattern of hostilities - this time in the shape of a “nuclear

weapon”. Indeed, as will be seen next, the PM makes it clear that “we” (Israel), due to the immoral nature of the world (as presented above), will “have to deal with [the “Iranian threat”] ... in the near future”.

### **Israel’s Implied Threat**

A routine official speech by an Israeli PM, in an unveiling plaque event, becomes a pessimistic presentation of Israel’s “existential threat”; in the shape of Iran’s “nuclear threat” and its calls to *wipe Israel off the map*. Like the previous presented speech of the PM, in Germany, where much attention was given to Israel’s position of power (as a reminder: *[d]oomed are they who remain complacent and do not prepare themselves to thwart the danger*) this speech constructs Israel’s position of power, as well.

Due to the comparison between Iran and Nazi Germany, and the nature of the dominate narrative of the Holocaust (never-again: Jewish blood would never be abandoned or defenseless again), Israel’s PM constructs a coherent message that can well be interpreted in militarized terms:

*“[I]t is not only history that we have to learn, but also how to derive the necessary conclusions in order to be able to cope with what we have to deal with at the present time and in the near future.”*

To contextualize Israel’s *necessary conclusions* and means to *cope* with the “existential threat” (as presented in the quotation above); for better understanding the urgency of defusing the destructive relations between those regional powers (Israel and Iran); and for better understanding the political discourse, I find it crucial to describe a few statements, by Israel’s PM, that followed the presented speech:

- In an interview to a German TV station, approximately six weeks after the Yad-Vashem speech and one day ahead of the Grünwald speech, Israel’s PM referred to the “Iranian threat” and said: “[c]an you see that is the same level when you are aspiring to have a nuclear weapon as America, France, Israel

and Russia?”<sup>36</sup>. The remark stimulated a debate both in Israel and by the world media. Did Olmert violate the ambiguousness nuclear policy by admitting that Israel possesses nuclear weapons? Was it a ‘slip of the tongue’ or a calculated concealed threat again Iran (implying on Israel’s nuclear capabilities)?

- Days before Olmert calculated or miscalculated ‘slip of the tongue’ the following headline was published in Haaretz: “Olmert declines to rule out military action against Iran”<sup>37</sup>. In an interview to a German magazine (the *Der Spiegel*) when asked about the prospect of a military strike against Iran the PM replied: “I rule nothing out”. Moreover, the PM criticized (as it was presented in Haaretz) “the international community's hesitation in dealing with Ahmadinejad” and mobilized the following message in his communication with the international community: “I expect significantly more dramatic steps to be taken. Here is a leader who says openly that it is his aim to wipe Israel off the map. Israel is a member of the United Nations... That someone says such a thing these days is absolutely criminal”.

Hopefully, the statements by the PM (that were mobilized ahead of his trip to Germany and the Grünwald speech) help to put Israel’s *necessary conclusions* and means to *cope* with the “Iranian threat” in context. The means to *cope* with the threat can be interpreted by the PM ‘slip of the tongue’ in a very hectic way, as nuclear means. And, either conventional or not, the PM in his own words did not rule out a military act (*I rule nothing out*). Those highly communicated statements points on the habitual tendency to communicate the victimhood of the Holocaust from a position of power, sovereignty, and control. A tendency that is rooted in the consciousness-changing event of the Eichmann trial and might be well interpreted

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<sup>36</sup> Ynet.com, 12.12.2006, AP and Ynet ; “Olmert: Iran wants nuclear weapons like Israel” (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3338783,00.html>

<sup>37</sup> Haaretz.com, 09.12.2006, by news agencies; “Olmert declines to rule out military action against Iran” (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/798736.html>

by three of Bar-Tal's (1998) eight themes for describing the societal beliefs of a society that is coping with intractable conflict.

The societal beliefs about security are legitimized (all means to *cope* with the threat are justified (*I rule nothing out*)) by the 'lesson' of the Holocaust (Jewish blood would never be abandoned or defenseless again). The threat (in this case Iran) is dehumanized, through adversary's delegitimization, and compared to no less than the *Nazi evil*, and this communicative tactics increasing, in return, the justness of one's own goals under the "existential" circumstances.

I presented above the discursive tendency of Israel's PM through two speeches. The findings clearly indicate on the tendency to associate the memory of the Holocaust, through its constitutive narratives, with a contemporary threat (in this case: the "Iranian threat"). However, the incorporation of the memory of the Holocaust, in the speeches, is some what expected, due to the symbolic magnitude of the speeches (both were given at Holocaust commemorative sites (Yad Vashem and the Grünwald platform)). I would therefore like to explore next if the same discursive tendency might be detected in a speech that was given in the U.S.: a 'Holocaust neutral' location.

## ***Israel's Prime Minister in the U.S.***

The next interpretation is from a speech that was given in the most influential annual event of the United Jewish Communities (UJC) General Assembly in LA<sup>38</sup> (November 14, 2006). Also here, Israel's PM chose to instrumentalize the traumatic memory of the Holocaust, in contemporary frame of reference, and to directly relate it to the "Iranian threat".

### **The Slogan**

As an 'appetizer', for the presentation and interpretation of the relevant content from the speech, I would like to highlight and interpret one sentence that most coherently represents (to my opinion) the essence of Israel's official discourse concerning Iran; a political discourse that seems to be rooted in what Zertal referred to as Israel's "culture of death", because it intimately relates to a traumatic memory that is being revived in contemporary frame of reference.

***We cannot tolerate – we will not tolerate – those who challenge Israel's right to exist while actively seeking to develop the catastrophic weapons to fulfill their goals***

In line with the presented contextualization of the constitutive legacy of the Holocaust discourses, this sentence can be regarded as a constitutive slogan that symbolizes Israel's political discourse regarding any "existential threat", but, in this case, it explicitly refers to the "Iranian threat"; a contemporary "existential threat" that in line with the presented "cutting edge of constructivist research" (Gourevitch 2002, p.319), which emphasizes the nature of norms and identities but do not deny crucial materialistic patterns of behaviour (such as military abilities), is visualizes in both 'ideological means' (*challenging Israel's right to exist*) and 'materialistic means' (*develop the catastrophic weapons to fulfill their goals*).

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<sup>38</sup> PM-office (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Archive/Speeches/2006/11/speechujc141106.htm>

Hopefully, the traditional tendency of Holocaust themes - to appear in periods of crises - becomes visible in the analysis up until now. It was Egypt that represented “existential threat” in the Israeli political discourse in the 60’Th and stimulated, in return, Holocaust associations. Apparently, nowadays, the “existential threat” is represented by Iran, stimulating, in a repetitive manner, Holocaust associations (as it is represented here by Israel’s PM). Accordingly, the cited sentence can be perceived as a slogan that circulates in time and place; a repetitive theme in the Israeli political discourse that is mobilized here (by Israel’s PM) in regards to the “Iranian threat”.

Following the Eichmann legacy the existential issue (*Israel’s right to exist*) is communicated from a position of power, sovereignty, and control. A constitutive legacy that is clearly evidential in the PM slogan: *[w]e cannot tolerate – we will not tolerate – those who challenge Israel’s right to exist*. And, as will be described, is mobilized to the international community.

### **Unifying Victimization**

In his highly communicated speech in front of the UJC Israel’s PM chose to point on the unity between Israel and the Diaspora; imaginary unity that revive around historic victimhood.

“Throughout our history, when others expected us to cast our faith into darkness and despair, we have always been guided by the miracle of light.”

Israel’s PM is clearly attempting to construct a sense of unity between the Diaspora and Israel. He talks about a common history (*our history*) and common faith (*our faith*), and he presents it in a positive self image; a positive self image of a society that is being guided by no less than the *miracle of light*. Clearly, the most positive self image is constructed and is being intensified through the delegitimization of the ‘other’. The PM constructs a contrast between *light* and *darkness*, between ‘our’ *miracle of light* and the ‘other’ attempt (*throughout ... history*) to *cast our faith into darkness and despair*.



It is functional for a society that is involved in intractable conflict to perceive itself as the victim. It contributes to the domestic sense of justice, increases solidarity, and provides moral justification to oppose the adversary (Bar-Tal 1998, p.12-13). Accordingly, we can clearly see how the Jewish people are presented by as victims to malicious attempts by the 'others' to *cast our* [the Jewish people] *faith into darkness and despair*. Following Wendt & Fearon's (2002) theorization that international level understanding depends on social and cultural domestic understanding I find this sort of construction of meaning, by Israel's PM, as valuable for better understanding Israel's communication in the international arena.

### **A Victorious form of Defeatism**

Although that Israel's PM tends to mobilize and codify the victimization of the Jewish people as a source of common destiny. Following the structural paradox of the victim-community, also in this speech, the victimhood is represented in a victorious way.

In the next presented quote the structural paradox of the victim-community can be well visualized:

"Once before, calls to wipe out the Jewish people were appeased by the community of nations. Once before, but never again."

The Jewish people are presented as the 'optimal victims': the *calls* [and attempts] *to wipe out* their existence were *appeased* by the world (*the community of nations*). The victimhood, as it is presented by Israel's PM, is absolute; it is not 'only' a limited victimhood by one perpetrator but victimhood that is embraced *by the community of nations* (or *all countries of the world* as it was presented by him at the Grünwald speech (indicating on the tendency to blame the consequences of the Holocaust not only on Nazi Germany but on all of its collaborators)).

However, this is the legacy of the defeated 'old Jew'; the legacy of the Diaspora, and although that this legacy is well communicated it is presented also in this speech from a position of power. The *calls to wipe out the Jewish people*

are presented as the defeated legacy of the past (*Once before*) and as a contrast to Israel's position of power and sovereignty. Modern attempts to *wipe out the Jewish people* will not go undefiance, declares Israel's PM and articulated it through one of the most constitutive narratives of the Holocaust: *never again*. Israel, as the discourse says, was reborn from the ashes of defeat; it has learned the lesson from the total victimization (as it is represented by the event of the Holocaust); and it will therefore use all means of its power to overcome the victimizer, which apparently circulates in relation to time in place.

### **Beautiful Death**

Israel's second war in Lebanon is presented as "Iran's war". And, in accordance to Bar-Tal (1998) category of adversary's delegitimization, the war is described as a war that was enforced on Israel by "wanton aggression started by Hizbullah and fueled by... hate". Moreover, in contrast to the adversary's *wanton aggression* and *hate* Israel's forces are described in the most patriotic way as the "brave soldiers of the IDF [Israel Defense Army]... who volunteered in unprecedented numbers, fought with resilience and heroism... fought without fear, hesitation or self-consideration". Clearly, through such a contrast (between 'us' and the 'other'), societal beliefs about the justness of one's own goals, and a collective sense of unity, are constructed by Israel's PM.

The PM communication can be interpreted as a thematic construction that is originated in the constitutive narrative of power and renewal. Following the tendency of his predecessors, Israel's highest authority constructs in contemporary terms (represented here by the second Lebanon war) the myth of the 'new Jew'. The figure of the 'new Jew' (the *brave soldiers of the IDF*) is represented here as a heroic type, that will choose a "beautiful death" of self defense and heroism (*fought without fear, hesitation or self-consideration*) instead of the 'humiliating' alternative of 'death which is not beautiful at all' (as represented by the

victimhood of the Holocaust ('went like sheep to the slaughter')). This discursive tendency is clearly rooted in the constitutive narrative of power and renewal.

### **The Intimidating Consequences from the World Apathy**

As presented, up until now, we can clearly detect the overlapping of discourses. Israel's PM reconstructs the defeated legacy of the Jewish people victimhood. Nevertheless, following the legacy of the Eichmann trial and the constitutive narrative of the power and renewal, he constructs it (the victimhood) in a victorious way. Both frames are constructed simultaneously, but they are mobilized for different purposes. The victimhood is mobilized as an 'appeal' to the world conscience; to stimulate the world into action (against Iran), whereas Israel's position of power is mobilized, simultaneously, as a sort of warning to the path of un-united front, by the international community, against Iran's nuclear ambitions; an 'un-united front' that will have (according to Israel's PM) grim consequences:

*"If Iran achieves the ability to produce nuclear weapons... we will enter a new era of instability unlike any the world has ever seen."*

The following four sections may help to clarify this sort of communication:

1) "No longer can the international community afford to hesitate, contemplate or waver in its dealing with this defiant state. No longer can we allow Iran to defer the demands of the international community without consequence.

We cannot tolerate – we will not tolerate – those who challenge Israel's right to exist while actively seeking to develop the catastrophic weapons to fulfill their goals."

Same like the Holocaust-related slogan of never-again so is *no longer* a Holocaust-related slogan. In a historical continuity of discourses the world hesitation, contemplation and wavering from the Nazi threat is revived in contemporary frame of reference for scoring debating points in the Israeli Iranian conflict and for urging the international community to 'take a stand' in the Iranian issue (*No longer can we allow Iran to defer the demands of the international community*

*without consequences*). The interpretation of the frame *no longer*, in the context of the sentence, is coherently articulated by Israel's PM: the alternative to a renewal hesitation, contemplation and wavering by the international community, from taking a stand against the contemporary threat to the Jewish existence (as represented by Iran's *calls to wipe out the Jewish people*), *will not be tolerate* by the state of Israel, due to the legacy of the past (the Holocaust).

Israel's PM mobilizes a very coherent message to the international community: "we" (the Jewish people) have learned the lesson (from the world hesitation) and will therefore not *tolerate* contemporary *challenge[s]* to *Israel's right to exist*.

2) "We have reached the pivotal moment of truth regarding Iran.

It would be an unbearable sin to future generations to allow Iran to obtain nuclear weapons. What would we tell our children? How can we justify not preventing this catastrophic event? If Iran achieves the ability to produce nuclear weapons, as we know it is seeking to do, we will enter a new era of instability unlike any the world has ever seen. We cannot afford to wait. We must all speak with one voice."

Typical to a defeated mentality of siege, also here, a very pessimistic world view is of evidence. The *unbearable sin to future generations (to allow Iran to obtain nuclear weapons)* is presented in the most urgent terms (*we have reached the pivotal moment of truth regarding Iran*). With those associations Israel's PM mobilizes an 'appeal' to the world conscience (*the community of nations*). He poetically asks: *[w]hat would we tell our children? How can we justify not preventing this catastrophic event?*

In line with the constitutive lesson from the Holocaust, Jewish blood would never be abandoned or defenseless again, those are rhetoric questions that are meant to intensify the conclusion:

*If Iran achieves the ability to produce nuclear weapons... we will enter a new era of instability unlike any the world has ever seen.*

Following the structural paradox of the victim-community (as previously presented), the associated victimhood of a new *catastrophic event* is

communicated from a position of power, sovereignty, and control. Unlike the defeated tendency of the Diaspora, and from Israel's position of relevant power, the implications from a renewal 'hesitation' by the international community (as was experienced in the Holocaust) will bear the most destructive consequences (a *new era of instability unlike any the world has ever seen*). Following the legacy of the Eichmann trial, and correlating with the theory of the victim-community, the victimhood of the Holocaust is well communicated, but it is communicated instrumentally from a position of power, sovereignty, and control.

3) "America's leadership in preventing Iran's nuclearization is indisputable and unequalled... President George W. Bush in Washington. Believe me, he is a great friend to the State of Israel... His determination to prevent this most serious of developments is unquestionable. But America must have the support of the international community if we are to successfully defuse this mortal threat [appeal]."

Israel's PM makes an undistinguished link between Israel and the U.S. regarding their positions on the Iranian issue (*America's leadership in preventing Iran's nuclearization is indisputable*). However, due to America's dependency on the international community position on the issue (*But America must have the support of the international community if we are to successfully defuse this mortal threat*) its friendship to Israel (*he [Bush] is a great friend to the State of Israel*) is presented with much skepticism.

The international community hesitation in the past event of the Holocaust is constructed coded and framed in relation to a contemporary event: the Iranian issue; indicating, in return, on the cultural traumatic nature of the collective memory of the Holocaust domestically in Israel. Due to America's reliance on the international community *support* (the same international community that administratively and passively assisted to the implementation of the final solution) America's determination, *to prevent this most serious of developments (Iran's nuclearization)*, is conditioned and confined with much skepticism by the instrumentalized uses of the preposition BUT.

4) "Our actions will be measured by results, not intentions. Our integrity will remain intact only if we prevent Iran's devious goals, not if we try our best but fail. Our generation will be judged by its ability to ensure peace and security, not by its failure to stand up to the most challenging of threats. We did not choose this responsibility. But the burden is ours. We cannot, we will not, we shall not shy away from confronting this challenge [Power].

Once before, calls to wipe out the Jewish people were appeased by the community of nations. Once before, but never again."

Constituted in the traumatic memory of the Holocaust is deep mistrust about the world intentions, a sociocognitive characteristic of mentality of siege that can be visualized through Israel's PM construction of meaning. After mobilizing much doubt and pessimistic skepticism, concerning the world determination to unite against the Iranian "nuclear threat", Israel's PM concludes, the Iranian section in his speech, with a domestic appeal that can be also interpreted as an 'appeal' to the international community.

Israel's PM paints a gloomy picture of how the Jewish people will probably be left alone (yet again) in a hostile world: *[w]e did not choose this responsibility. But the burden is ours.* Israel is presented, again, in a heroic frame as the 'last line of defense' for preventing *Iran's devious goals* and/or *to stand up to the most challenging of threats*. From such a distinction between 'us' (those who seek to *ensure peace and security*) and the 'other' (*Iran's devious goals*) the PM constructs societal beliefs about security and justness of one's own goals. And, from Israel's position of sovereignty and relevant power, Israel's highest authority concludes with a sentence that can not be interpreted other than an expression that articulates a probability to confrontation:

*We cannot, we will not, we shall not shy away from confronting this challenge.*

Finally, in accordance with the theorization of the cultural trauma, where past traumatic events tend to be associated with contemporary events, Israel's PM

associates, in the most coherently manner, the lesson of the collective memory of the Holocaust with the current crisis of Iran:

“Once before, calls to wipe out the Jewish people were appeased by the community of nations. Once before, but never again.”

The collective memory of the Holocaust is evidently being revived, by Israel’s PM, in contemporary frame of reference. In an ‘appeal’ to the world conscience Israel’s PM reminds the world that their appeasement with Nazi Germany is a constitutive lesson in Israel. However, this is the defeated legacy of the defenseless Diaspora. In view of that, Israel’s PM mobilizes the constitutive slogan of the Holocaust (in Israel): *never again*. Israel’s PM makes it clear that modern attempts to wipe out the Jewish people (as represented here by the “Iranian threat”) will suffer the most apocalyptic consequences (*we will enter a new era of instability unlike any the world has ever seen*).

### **Summary**

I portrayed in chapter four the traditional tendency of the traumatic memory of the Holocaust to revive in the Israeli discourse in periods of crises. In view of that, I assumed that the same tendency takes place in the current crisis with Iran. In order to validate this assumption, I opened with an indepth discourse analysis of three speeches, by Israel’s PM. The findings clearly indicate, on the “overlapping” and “historical continuity” of the discourses, pointing on their stability over time. In line with the tendency of his predecessors, Israel’s current PM interrelates the social category of the Holocaust in contemporary frame of reference; a repeated tendency to associate Holocaust-related-themes with contemporary threats to Jewish existent, which highlights the relevance of the theorization of “cultural trauma” in the interpretation of Israel’s communication in the current crisis with Iran.

In more abstract terms, Israel's PM tendency - to associate the contemporary Iranian issue with the historic event of the Holocaust - highlights the relevance of domestic norms and identities understandings in order to better understand international phenomena. In this case, very hectic norms and identities are communicated by Israel's PM. A hectic tendency that is 'stimulated' by Iran's maximization of power (its nuclear program) and its incitement, and can therefore correlate, to my opinion, with Kaufmann's (2001) presented theorization that: "[h]ostile and fear rise as a result of symbolic events that activate the myths, such as ... a leader explicitly manipulating symbols".

In view of that, states communication ought to be analyzed domestically in such a manner that will uncover their nature of norms and identities. A supplementary perspective that does not deny crucial materialistic patterns of behaviour that characterizes much of the international politics scholarship. Indeed, we saw in the political discourse (as it is constructed by Israel's PM) the appearance of concepts like power seeking states (Iran's *nuclearization*). Therefore, I chose an approach that does not deny the existence of a materialist phenomenal world, external to thoughts, but theoretically stresses that practices such as norms and identities can constitute themselves as objects of knowledge that should therefore be studied for interpretive purpose. Interpretive purpose that hopefully revealed, how the social category of the collective memory of the Holocaust, is revived in contemporary terms, and how it "overlaps" with theories that relates to the constitutive origins of the collective memory of the Holocaust, and/or to the sociocognitive implications from such a collective trauma.

My findings clearly indicate that Israel's PM mobilizes his construction of meaning in line with the already constitutive narratives of the Holocaust memory. Firstly, in line with the constitutive narrative of Zionism (power and renewal), Israel's PM manages to construct victorious frames from the horrific defeat of the Holocaust. The Holocaust is presented as the defeated legacy of the 'old Jews' and in contrast to Israel, which is presented by him as a new form of existence; a new



form of existence that did not only overcome the Nazi perpetrator but will overcome any contemporary threats to Jewish existence (represented by him as the “Iranian threat”). Secondly, the “consciousness-changing event” of the Eichmann trial constructs the habitual tendency to communicate the victimhood of the Holocaust from a position of power, sovereignty, and control. Indeed, the traumatic memory of the Holocaust is constructed, by the PM, as a metaphor of absolute victimhood, in order to intensify and highlight the constitutive lesson of the Holocaust. A lesson that is based on the constitutive lesson from the Holocaust (that was first introduced in the Eichmann trial): never-again.

By relating and associating the historical legacies of the Holocaust with a contemporary threat (the “Iranian threat”) Israel’s PM communicates with the ‘beaten conscience’ of the world (reminding them their moralist obligation to the Jewish existent). However, at the same time, following the mentality of siege, Israel views the nations of the world as “evil, immoral, utilitarian, indifferent, and often brutal” (Bar – Tal & Teichman 2005, p.97). It was highly evidential in the PM communication. Deep mistrust about the world intentions is constructed. As evidence, the ‘appeal’ to the world conscience is constructed with much doubt and with what I referred to as an implied threat. Israel’s PM makes it clear that Jewish blood would never be abandoned or defenseless again, and if the world will not unite against the “threat” (Iran) the implications will be catastrophic.

The extensive use of Holocaust-related-themes must have some sociocognitive emotional affect on the Israeli society; sociocognitive emotional affect that, according to Zertal, is influencing towards a “culture of death” in the Israeli society. Indeed, as presented in the chapter four, Israel’s collective memory of the Holocaust (or “collective memory of death and trauma” as defined by Zertal (2005, p.1)) traditionally tended to be “produced, processed, coded, and put to use in Israel’s public space” (p.1), in periods of crises. From this perspective, the findings above clearly point on identical tendency in the contemporary crisis with Iran. It is of evidence that Israel’s highest authority chose to produce, process,

code, and put to use the collective memory of the Holocaust in Israel's public sphere, in direct relation to a contemporary threat: the "Iranian threat".

However, although that Israel's highest authority instrumentalization of the collective memory of Holocaust, in contemporary frame of reference and in direct relation to the "existential Iranian threat", may visualize, to some extent, the way in which Israel's political sphere derives some formative and normative impulses from the fateful memory of the Holocaust. Israel's PM does not, and can not, represent the political discourse as a whole (relatively speaking).

Therefore, I would like to explore, in the next chapter, if the construction of meaning of Israel's PM, as portrayed above, can be authenticate by other influential politicians (that take an active part in Israel's political sphere and referred to the Iranian issue in the regarded frame of time). Does Israel's PM evidential tendency, to communicate the collective memory of the Holocaust in relation with the current crisis with Iran; is the tendency of other influential *collective agents*? Can identical themes (Holocaust-related), which were mobilized by Israel's PM, be identified in the communication of other *collective agents*?

## 6 The Discursive Tendency of Key Political Figures

In this section I would like to explore if Israel's PM discursive tendency, to communicate the collective memory of the Holocaust in line with the constitutive narratives of the Holocaust memory; to reconstruct the memory of the Holocaust in contemporary frame of reference; and to directly associate the "Iranian threat" with the "Nazi evil", is the tendency of other political *collective agents*. Does the PM construction of meaning (as presented in the previous chapter) represent the Israeli political discourse concerning Iran?

For that purpose, I will present relating statements, which were mobilized, in the same frame of time, and communicated on the same issue (the "Iranian threat"), by leading Israeli political figures, and explore their correspondence with the PM communication. My aim here is to identify and to visualize the assumed stability of the political discourse, as constructed by Israel's PM. I chose for this task three political figures that, due to their contemporary status in the Israeli political sphere, might well construct a political discourse and influence, to some extent, Israel's behavior in the international arena. Two of them, Tzipi Livni (Israel's acting PM and Minister of foreign affairs) and Shimon Peres (vice premier in the regarded frame of time (2006), and the ninth President of the State of Israel in his current position), are most dominant political figures in the PM political party (Kadima), which consequently, took and take an active role in 'navigating' the Israeli political system. And, finally, in order to portray the political discourse in more general terms, I will conclude with Benjamin Netanyahu which, due to his status as an opposition leader, might present an alternative discourse.

## ***The Minister of Foreign Affairs***

Tzipi Livni is Israel's acting PM, foreign affairs Minister (FM), and a leading member of Kadima party (Heb.: progress party). She is a dominant political figure in Israel's current political sphere, and following the description of *collective agents* (agents who are based in particular places in the social structure and have the ability to construct "meaning" in the public sphere (Alexander 2004: p.11)), her construction of meaning should be of value for describing the official political discourse in Israel.

### **The gas chambers stand as silent proof of the horrors**

1) In Israel's parliament, one month before the "Holocaust conference" in Teheran (November 12, 2006), Israel's FM (Tzipi Livni) directly referred to the "conference" as followed:<sup>39</sup>

"No one can erase the horror, the evil, the piles of hair, the mass graves, the numbers on people's arms, the humiliation, and the human experimentation – no one has the power to erase all this. The gas chambers stand as silent proof of the horrors. Everyone who arrives sees the fingernail scratches on the concrete, scratches of people who only had those fingernails to scratch the concrete – scratched which are engraved in our hearts and souls.

I am not here to prove that the Holocaust existed here in Israel, but rather to take advantage of the stage I have been given, here in Israel's Knesset, in order to call on the entire world to understand that what is happening in Tehran is not only Israel and the Jewish world's problem, but rather the problem of anyone who supports the values of the free world.

The memory of the Holocaust is crucial for the entire international community, and not only for Israel and the Jewish people. By denying the Holocaust, Iran's president is seeking to create legitimacy for his declared intentions to annihilate Israel and spread his radical doctrine which contradicts the values of the free world."

Following the constitutive legacy of the Eichmann trial, which (as shown) is in constant use by Israel's PM, Israel's FM mobilized, as well, a highly emotional appeal to the international community, and she did so from a position of power and control: the position of Israel's sovereignty.

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<sup>39</sup> Ynet.com, 12.11.06, breaking-news; "Livni: Impossible to erase pain of Holocaust victims" (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3338775,00.html>

The absolute victimhood of the Holocaust, the *mass graves*; the *human experimentation*; and the *gas chambers*, are most poetically and intensely articulated by the FM (e.g. *the fingernail scratches on the concrete* [of the gas chambers], *scratches of people who only had those fingernails to scratch the concrete*), emphasizing the extent of the Holocaust trauma and its fundamental nature in Israel's sense of identity. The event of the Holocaust, according to the FM, is *engraved in our* [Israel's] *hearts and souls*, articulating it as a cultural traumatic memory domestically in Israel.

The memory of the Holocaust is being revived by Israel's FM in contemporary frame of reference and in direct relation to the Iranian crisis: *[b]y denying the Holocaust, Iran's president is seeking to create legitimacy for his declared intentions to annihilate Israel and spread his radical doctrine which contradicts the values of the free world.*

The "Iranian threat" is presented as an "existential threat" to Israel, and as an international threat to *the values of the free world*. The 'appeal' to the world conscience is constructed in the same tendency as it was described up until now. Iran is represented as a state who seeks to *annihilate Israel*, and, therefore, due to the world beaten conscience (from the annihilation of Europe Jewry), the 'appeal' is expected to be of greater magnitude.

### **We know the lessons of the past**

2) In a speech at the UN General Assembly (September 21, 2006) Israel's FM mobilized the following messages:<sup>40</sup>

\* "There is no greater challenge to our values than that posed by the leaders of Iran... They deny and mock the Holocaust. They speak proudly and openly of their desire to wipe Israel off the map. And now, by their actions, they pursue the weapons to achieve this objective, to imperil the region and to threaten the world."

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<sup>40</sup> \*The first quote: Haaretz.com, 21.09.06, Shlomo Shamir; "*Livni: Iran poses greatest threat to world's values*" (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/765545.html>

\*The second quote: Ynet.com, 21.09.06, Ynet; "*Livni: World faces moment of truth over Iran issue*" (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3306526,00.html>

\* "We know the lessons of the past. We know the consequences of appeasement and indifference. There is no place for such leaders in this forum. There is no place for such a regime in the family of nations."

Same like Israel's PM presented 'slogan' concerning the "Iranian threat" (*We cannot tolerate – we will not tolerate – those who challenge Israel's right to exist while actively seeking to develop the catastrophic weapons to fulfill their goals*), that articulates the tension between the 'ideological threat' (*challenging Israel's right to exist*) and the 'materialistic threat' (*develop the catastrophic weapons*). Also here, the ideological descriptions of the "Iranian threat" (*They deny and mock the Holocaust. They speak proudly and openly of their desire to wipe Israel off the map*) is intensified and realized by a materialistic description (*they pursue the weapons to achieve this objective*). Constructing it, in return, as an "existential threat":

*There is no greater challenge to our values than that posed by the leaders of Iran*

In the second quote, a clear 'appeal' to the world conscience can be visualized yet again. The lesson of the Holocaust (never-again) is instrumentally mobilized here to the world: *We know the lessons of the past. We know the consequences of appeasement and indifference. There is no place for such leaders in this forum. There is no place for such a regime in the family of nations.*

This most coherent message is articulated by a high rank Israeli policy maker (Israel's FM) in an internationally communicated event, at the UN General Assembly. The most constitutive narrative of the Holocaust (never-again) is directly mobilized to the world conscience. And, 'armed' with this normative perception, an instrumental requirement is mobilized: *[t]here is no place for such a regime in the family of nations.*

### **The promise of "never again"**

3) At the same UJC General Assembly conference (from where I presented the third speech by Israel's PM) Israel's FM argued, as well, for a decisive action

against Iran, justifying it, in what can be identified now as a repetitive tendency, with the most constitutive Holocaust slogan: never-again:<sup>41</sup>

"We face a regime that denies and mocks the Holocaust while seeking the weapons to perpetrate one. Iran's words and actions are not only a direct threat to Israel, but they are no less a threat to the values that the international community as a whole claims to hold dear... If these values mean anything - if the promise of "never again" is more important than the price of oil - then the time for international indifference and hesitation in the face of the Iranian threat has long passed."

The constitutive lesson of the Holocaust (never-again) is articulated here and mobilized to the world 'beaten conscience' with a sense of blame and cynicism: *if the promise of "never again" is more important than the price of oil- then the time for international indifference and hesitation in the face of the Iranian threat has long passed*. Not only that the contemporary threat to Jewish existent, *a regime [Iran] that... seeking the weapons to perpetrate one* [a Holocaust], is associated with the memory of the Holocaust, it is most specifically and instrumentally associated with the dominate narrative of the Holocaust *never again* (Jewish blood would never be abandoned or defenseless again).

Moreover, the "Iranian threat" is described in the most urgent terms as an immediate threat that must be dealt with without hesitation (*the time... has long passed*). And also here, the ideological threat is backed by materialistic realization of the threat: *[w]e face a regime that denies and mocks the Holocaust while seeking the weapons to perpetrate one*.

Evidentially, the traumatic memory of the Holocaust is being revived in the current crisis with Iran, also by Israel's FM, indicating, in return, on its cultural traumatic nature.

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<sup>41</sup> Ynet.com, 13.11.06, Israel news; "Livni: Iran a threat to the world, we need to wake up" (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3327421,00.html>

## ***The Vice Premier***

With a political career lasting over sixty-six years and three terms as PM of Israel Shimon Peres is the most senior politician actively serving in Israel's political sphere, currently today he is the ninth President of the State of Israel and in 2006 (my frame of time for the analysis) he served as the vice premier (VP).

Consequently, I perceive the construction of meaning by such a senior politician as crucial to describe the official political discourse concerning the "Iranian threat".

### **They think we have a bomb, let them think**

1) On the closing day of the "Holocaust conference" in Teheran Israel's VP mobilized the following statement in a symposium in Tel Aviv:<sup>42</sup>

"We need to build up our power without threatening anyone. I'm in favor of ambiguity, I formulated it. They think we have a bomb, let them think... Iran's nuclear weapons are a problem of the world. Putin can say what he wants, for him nuclear weapons are a nightmare, as well as for others. I don't believe the world will ignore it... Israel isn't alone. We need to launch a huge campaign against the ayatollahs. On this matter we need to attack this lunatic Ahmadinejad."

Following the constitutive narrative of power and renewal, the senior Zionist leader (Shimon Peres) constructs here the mythological narrative of the heroically 'new Jew', in modern terms. Israel is presented as a new form of existence ('a dignity sense of existence') that will overcome the perpetrator (who ever he is). Israel's relevant power, is suggested in the form of nuclear weaponry (*They [Iran] think we [Israel] have a bomb, let them think*), but unlike the dominant pessimistic mentality of siege, which views Israel as standing alone in a hostile world, the habitual tendency to construct meaning (as was portrayed up until now), the VP is constructing here a more optimistic perception (in Israeli perspective): Israel *isn't alone*.

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<sup>42</sup> Ynet.com, 13.12.06, Attila Somfalvi; "*Peres: Israel should remain ambiguous on nukes*" (accessed 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3339801,00.html>



Israel is presented here as a powerful nation with dominant position in the international arena. Dominant enough to mobilize an international action (to some sort) against Iran: *a huge campaign against the ayatollahs. On this matter we need to attack this lunatic Ahmadinejad.*

**Ahmadinejad is a Holocaust denier who wants a new Holocaust**

2) In a direct relation to the “Holocaust convention” in Teheran, one month before its occurrence (November 12, 2006), Israel’s VP mobilized the following statement to the media:<sup>43</sup>

“Let them go to Auschwitz, Birkenau, and Treblinka and see which horrors the Jewish people went through. Ahmadinejad is a Holocaust denier who wants a new Holocaust and is calling for the destruction of the Jewish state.”

The memory of the Holocaust is being framed, also by Israel’s VP, in contemporary frame of reference and in direct relation to the “Iranian threat”, indicating on its cultural traumatic nature. The victimhood of the Holocaust is presented in the shape of *Auschwitz, Birkenau, and Treblinka* (the most notorious concentration camps on European soil), and Iran is framed and associated, in this respect, not only as *Holocaust denier* but as a regional actor *who wants a new Holocaust and is calling for the destruction of the Jewish state.*

This section can coherently illustrate how the victimhood of the Holocaust is communicated in relation to Iran, while the previous section, by the VP, can illustrate how Israel’s position of power is constructed in relation to the threat.

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<sup>43</sup> Ynet.com, 12.11.06, Israel news; “*Peres: Iran Holocaust convention is a convention of liars*” (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3338585,00.html>

## ***The Opposition Leader***

Benjamin Netanyahu is a former PM of Israel, currently the Chairman of the conservative Likud Party, and the official leader of the Opposition in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament). He is a dominant political figure in the Israeli political sphere, and a leading PM candidate in the next elections.

The discourse has been described, up until now, by *collective agents* that are major political actors in the current ruling political party (kadima), political figures that fulfilled crucial political positions (prime minister, minister of foreign affairs and vice premier) at the frame time of my investigation. Does different frames (concerning the Iranian issue) are constructed by the opposition leader? Or, is it the case that the same Holocaust-related-themes are being constructed also by the political opponent from the right. The answer can be already indicated by the next presented title.

### **It's 1938 and Iran is Germany; Ahmadinejad is preparing another Holocaust**

I will open with two sets of quotes from a very metaphorical speech, by Israel's current opposition leader, that was held at the same annual event of the UJC General Assembly, in LA, where both the PM and the FM attended and gave speeches.<sup>44</sup>

\* "It's 1938 and Iran is Germany. And Iran is racing to arm itself with atomic bombs... Believe him and stop him... This is what we must do. Everything else pales before this... he [Ahmadinejad] is preparing another Holocaust for the Jewish state."

\* "No one cared then and no one seems to care now... There is still time. All ways must be considered. We can't let this thing happen... No one will defend the Jews if the Jews don't defend themselves... Iran's nuclear ambitions have to be stopped."

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<sup>44</sup> Haaretz.com, 14.11.06, Peter Hirschberg; "*Netanyahu: It's 1938 and Iran is Germany; Ahmadinejad is preparing another Holocaust*" (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/787766.html>

The first presented quote, by Israel's current opposition leader, is "drawing a direct analogy between Iran and Nazi Germany" (as Haaretz Correspondent, Peter Hirschberg, defined it). Nazi Germany is associated here in contemporary frame of reference, indicating, in return, on the traumatic cultural nature of the memory of the Holocaust in Israel, and following the mentality of siege the high rank politician is mobilizing here an extremely pessimistic world view: *he [Ahmadinejad] is preparing another Holocaust for the Jewish state.*

In accordance with the PM negative perception of the world (as a reminder: *[d]oomed are they who entertain the false illusion that they could... rely on the mercy of strangers*), which is constituted in Israel's sense of identity, also here we can witness the construction of a very gloomy perception. Israel is presented as standing alone in a hostile world: *[n]o one cared then and no one seems to care now*. The nations of the world are perceived as immoral and, following the mentality of siege, deep mistrust about the world intentions is well constructed here. According to the collective agent, the immorality of the 1940's is repeatedly appearing in present days, while *another Holocaust for the Jewish state* is being prepared; this time in the shape of a nuclear Holocaust.

However, in accordance with the presented discursive tendency up until now, and following the constitutive legacy of the Eichmann trial, also the opposition leader presents the victimhood of the previous Holocaust and the suggested new *Holocaust for the Jewish state* from a position of power and control. Israel is presented as a new form of existence that will not *let this thing happen* and use all means in its arsenal to make sure of it: *[a]ll ways must be considered*.

Indeed, a few days earlier, in an interview with a leading media figure (Razi Barkai), in Israel's army radio<sup>45</sup>, when asked about Israel's lack of ability to eliminate Iran's nuclear program, by military means, the opposition leader, and former PM, mobilized the following comment:

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<sup>45</sup> Published at the same article (Haaretz.com, 14.11.06).

*“I don't want to analyze the capability required to eliminate [the Iranian] threat, but this capability exists.”*

Back to the UJC speech, the constitutive slogan of the Holocaust, never-again (Jewish blood would never be abandoned or defenseless again), is of evidence also by the construction of meaning by Israel's opposition leader: *[w]e can't let this thing happen... Iran's nuclear ambitions have to be stopped*. And consequently, sociocognitive implications of a mentality of siege (from such traumatic associations) well follow. Due to the legacy of the Holocaust, Israel is presented as standing alone in a hostile world, totally reliant upon its position of relevant power:

*No one will defend the Jews if the Jews don't defend themselves... Iran's nuclear ambitions have to be stopped.*

### **Iran President more dangerous than Hitler**

2) Four months before the “Holocaust convention” in Teheran (September 12, 2006) the right-wing opposition leader (Netanyahu) mobilized the following message in an international counter terrorism conference held in Tel Aviv<sup>46</sup>.

\* “Hitler went out on a world campaign first, and then tried to get nuclear weapons. Iran is trying to get nuclear arms first. Therefore from that perspective, it is much more dangerous.”

\* “Hitler was defeated because he could not develop weapons of mass destruction. But Iran stands close to developing nuclear weapons. Does the world understand? ... The free world, when faced with fanatical ideologies, and when it understood the danger, eventually used its power to remove the danger. It won in the war against Nazism and communism in the Cold War. I believe that here too there will be a victory,”

Yet again, the collective memory of the Holocaust is being revived by Israel's opposition leader in contemporary frame of reference, indicating, in return, on the traumatic cultural nature of the memory of the Holocaust in Israel, and on the stability of political discourse. A straight forward analogy between Nazi Germany

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<sup>46</sup> Ynet.com, 12.09.06, Yaakov Lappin; “Bibi: Iran president more dangerous than Hitler” (accessed: 08.06.2008) [online]. URL - <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3303129,00.html>

and Iran is being constructed (*Hitler went out on a world campaign first, and then tried to get nuclear weapons. Iran is trying to get nuclear arms first*) and through much emphasis on materialistic factors (*nuclear arms*) the delegitimization of the adversary (Iran) is done here by presenting Iran as even more hazardous than Nazi Germany.

In the second quotation section, an ‘appeal’ to the world conscience is of evidence. After presenting Iran as a more hazardous danger to Jewish existence than what Hitler represented (due to the materialistic component of *nuclear arms*) an appeal to the world ‘beaten conscience’ is mobilized. In this respect, inconsistency in the collective agent construction of meaning can be identified. In contradiction with the previous presented speech (which has been mobilized to an American Jewish audience in a more advanced point of time; weeks before the “Holocaust convention” in Teheran), where the *collective agent* constructs a very clear discourse that is rooted in the mentality of siege: *[n]o one will defend the Jews if the Jews don't defend themselves*. In this communication, the *collective agent* constructs a much more ‘optimist’ discourse (in Israeli perspective). Unlike the conception of *[n]o one will defend the Jews*; a great deal of confidence is constructed here regarding the world compliance to *remove the danger* from Iran: *It [the international community] won in the war against Nazism... I believe that here too there will be a victory*.

## **Summary**

Evidently, the traumatic memory of the Holocaust tends to revive in contemporary frame of references and in direct relation to the “Iranian threat”, validating, in return, my theoretic assumption concerning how the collective memory of the Holocaust operates in the Israeli political discourse as a cultural trauma. Through “speech act theory” (Alexander 2004, 11), the presented collective agents (four dominant political figures and one more Jewish clerk) communicated with their audience (the Israeli public) in a symbolic terminology, which implicitly or

explicitly relates to the traumatic event of the past (the Holocaust). By so doing, a well manipulated and mediated traumatic historic event (the Holocaust), which is already culturally constructed and established in Israel's structure of meaning, seem to transform toward a "new master narrative" (Alexander 2004, 12), and enter into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity.

From the presented theoretical assumption that political communication is best successful if it is mobilized by metaphors and narratives, which intimately relates to the audience cultural meanings, it is of evidence that the emotional magnitude of the presented communication is of the highest degree; the association of a contemporary event with the traumatic event of the Holocaust. In this respect, we can clearly see how political agents (*collective agents*) promote their frames to the media (in an assume attempt to mobilize political support for their cause) through cultural messages that appeal to the collectivity's sense of its own identity (represented here by the collective memory of the Holocaust).

The presented political figures prompt their frames domestically; with an appeal to the public emotional magnitude, and internationally; with an 'appeal' to the world 'beaten conscience'. The traumatic memory of the Holocaust, which is culturally constructed in Israel's structure of meaning, is clearly instrumentalized by the political figures and revived in contemporary frame of references.

# 7 Conclusions

This thesis has approached conflict analysis though focusing on the representation of Holocaust themes, in the Israeli political discourse, in relation to the international crisis with Iran. It has shown that the collective memory of the Holocaust has been associated with the Iranian issue to the largest extent, by all of the investigated political agents (the PM, the FM, the VP and the opposition leader).

## **The Fixed Formation of the Discourse**

It is perhaps unsurprising that the traumatic memory of the Holocaust gains a prominent place in the contemporary political discourse in Israel. As was shown in chapter four, the collective memory of the Holocaust is deeply rooted in Israel's "area of objectivised culture" (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, p.127). And due to the nature of the past experience of the Holocaust, the threat of total extinction (by Israel's regional enemies) was considered as a realistic probability in circumstances of the extreme (Shapira 1997, p.94); a realist probability of extinction, that intensifies through the traditional tendency of Israeli *collective agents* to reconstruct the trauma claim of the Holocaust and to associate it to contemporary threats.

## **The Cultural Trauma**

As was shown in the theoretical chapter (chapter two), the capacity of a memory to reconstruct itself in contemporary "frame of reference" (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, p.130) indicates on its cultural origin, and when the cultural origin of the memory is rooted in "horrendous event" (Alexander 2004, p.1), not only that this event will be highly representative, in society's sense of collectively, it will also tend to be associated with contemporary threats. Constructing it, in

return, as a “cultural trauma” (Alexander 2004). Accordingly, correlating with the theorization of cultural trauma, the analysis has shown that the traumatic memory of the Holocaust most evidently represented and associated, in the political discourse, with the current crisis with Iran, symbolizing it, in return, as a fundamental threat to society’s existence.

Consequently, I would like to argue that Zertal’s (2005) characterization that: “Auschwitz – as the embodiment of the total, ultimate evil – was, and still is, summoned up for military and security issues and political dilemmas ... thus transmuting Israel into an ahistorical and apolitical twilight zone, where Auschwitz is not a past event but a threatening present and a constant option” (pp.3-4), is well validated in relation to the current security issue with Iran. The presented political figures clearly associated the traumatic event of the Holocaust with the Iranian issue, validating my assumption concerning the cultural traumatic nature of the memory of the Holocaust, in Israel’s sense of identity.

### **The Destructive Potential of Symbolic Interaction**

Following the presented theoretical settings, which guided me throughout the thesis, it was shown, in the analysis chapters, that through “speech act theory” (Alexander 2004, 11) *collective Israeli agents* are communicating with their audience (members of the *carrier group*) in a symbolic terminology, which implicitly and explicitly relates to the traumatic memory of the Holocaust. By so doing, the well mediated traumatic event of the Holocaust, which is already culturally constructed and established in society’s structure of meaning, is transforming the contemporary political event to an existential threat that, following Alexander’s (2004) theorization of the “cultural trauma”, enters “into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity” (pp.10-12).

In accordance with Kaufmann’s (2001) theorization of the “myth-symbol complex”, it is of clear evidence that the presented political figures communicates through *emotional expression*, and due to the investigated frame of time, this



tendency might be assumed as a respond to the most emotionally potent symbol evoked - Iran's "Holocaust convention". Iran is presented through *emotional expression* and portrayed as an existential threat to Jewish existent. Consequently, to my opinion, the findings are implying on the destructive influence that 'identity issues' play in the communication between the two actors; they are implying on how hostile identities might escalate an already escalated SD; and they are implying on how hostile myths might stimulate *fear of group extinction*, in the incited state.

In sum, chapters four, five and six have shown the sort of nature of norms and identities that are originated in the Israeli domestic realm and, following the theorization that "[h]ostile and fear rise as a result of symbolic events that activate the myths, such as ... a leader explicitly manipulating symbols" (Kaufmann's 2001, p.34), the discourse may well suggest that although that fear of group extinction (domestically in Israel) is constructed as a reaction to Iran's atomic program, it is also constructed as a reaction to Iran's manipulation of Israel's most intimate symbol: the Holocaust. In other words, the discourse indicates that Israel's fears are intensifying in reaction to the symbolic event of the "Holocaust convention" (held in Tehran). Emphasizing, in return, to my opinion, the destructive nature that identity issues might play in the communication between the actors.

### **The Materialistic Realization of the Threat**

In line with the presented "cutting edge of constructivist research" (Gourevitch 2002, p.319), which emphasizes the nature of norms and identities but do not deny crucial materialistic patterns of behaviour that characterize much of the international politics scholarship (such as military abilities), we could see how both 'ideological means' (Iran's calls to *wipe the existence of the State of Israel off the map* and its *Holocaust denial*) and 'materialistic means' (*the catastrophic weapons to fulfill their goals*) are incorporated in the Israeli political discourse.

As was shown in the analysis chapters, materialistic patterns of behaviour (Iran's *nuclearization*) were associated with identity-related issues (Iran's *Holocaust denial* and anti-Zionist rhetoric's). Iran's communicated aspiration (*to wipe the existence of the State of Israel off the map*) was constructed, by all of the presented political figures, in materialistic terms and as a realistic threat to Israel's existence. In other words, the codification of the "Iranian threat" was constructed by both materialistic and identity means, which associates Iran's nuclear program with its communicated aspiration *to wipe the existence of the State of Israel off the map*.

This is the nature of norms and identities that is constructed in the presented political discourse; a collective sense of victimization that is rooted in the memory of the Holocaust and constructed, in contemporary *frame of reference*, as a realistic "existential threat". The association of a contemporary "nuclear threat" with an existential historical experience of total extermination shows how the Holocaust operates as "cultural trauma" (Alexander 2004), in Israel's domestic realm.

### **The Holocaust Legacies**

The research question that has guided this thesis from beginning to end has been: *How the Collective Memory of the Holocaust (in Israel) is being revived in the Current Crisis with Iran?*

I showed above and concluded that the collective memory of the Holocaust revive in contemporary *frame of reference* – indicating on its cultural traumatic nature. Concerning the HOW, my interpretation showed that the collective memory of the Holocaust is being revived, in the political Israeli discourse, in tight accordance with constituting Holocaust legacies.

My findings described the habitual tendency to communicate the victimhood of the Holocaust from a position of power, sovereignty, and control. And under the

constitutive lesson of the Holocaust: Jewish blood would never be abandoned or defenseless again (never-again).

Through the “overlapping” of discourses, three repeating themes repeatedly appeared: Israel’s absolute victimhood, which was presented through the historical memory of the Holocaust. Israel’s position of relevant power, which was justified by the consequences of the Holocaust, and the ‘appeal’ to the world conscience, which through both of the victimhood and the renewal was instrumentally communicated in order mobilize the world into action against Iran.

Accordingly, in accordance with the traditional tendency of the past, the memory of the Holocaust is clearly being revived - in the Israeli political discourse - as a symbol for existential fears and the necessity to construct and maintain a strong military state.

Those were the hegemonic Holocaust discourses that with their *fix dominant meanings* appeared in the presented political discourse as cultural stories, which fit the available and familiar narratives of the Israeli society. We could see how the traditional tendency of Israeli politicians to produce, process, code, and put to use the “collective memory of death and trauma” (Zertal 2005, p.1) in Israel's public sphere (in periods of crises), is being authenticated in the current crisis with Iran.

The analysis chapters have shown a discursive tendency that constructed a very pessimistic world view. It was shown, in chapter four, that rooted in the long term history of the Diaspora and the short term history of Israel are sociocognitive emotional perceptions that results with high sensitivity to information, and deep mistrust about the world intentions. Accordingly, as was shown and interpreted, the information that comes from Teheran is constructed, in the Israeli political discourse, as evidence for reaffirming the already constitutive perception concerning the negative intentions of the world. As was shown, the *voices which echo* from Teheran are compared to no less then the *incitement by the Nazi Regime*, and furthermore; the historical *appeasement* with the Nazi communicated incitement, by *all countries of the world*, was associated with the *world ‘passive’*

reaction to Iran's communicated incitement. Those types of associations are indicating, to my opinion, on a discursive tendency that is validating the perception of Israel's mentality in terms of "siege mentality" (Bar – Tal & Teichman 2005); a mentality of siege which might well point on the accuracy of Zertal's (2005) sociocognitive characterization of the Israeli culture as "Culture of Death".

### **The Need for Future Research**

The presented above emphasizes, to my opinion, the need to investigate the destructive communication in the ME, and its affect on the Israeli society; a society that its political representatives tend to associate contemporary threats with no less than the traumatic event of the Holocaust, implying, in return, on a very hectic sociocognitive state-of-mind.

This thesis was descriptive by nature, describing and interpreting a political discourse. Future research, on the theme of the collective memory of the Holocaust and its revival in periods of crises, can try to generalize, for example, how the presented discursive tendency, by Israeli *collective agents*, is being codified in the Israeli public sphere.

Does the tendency to associate the Holocaust with contemporary threats construct "existential fears" in the Israeli public sphere? If so, do existential fears rise as a result of symbolic events that activate the myths, such as Iran's explicit manipulation of the memory of the Holocaust?

Does the memory of the Holocaust still works as an excuse, in the Israeli public sphere, for Israel's position of power and as an argument for its necessity to construct and maintain a strong military state?

Can a more sympathetic attitude, by regional Muslim actors, to the Jewish tragedy of the Holocaust, constructively defuse the tension in the region?

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