Year: 2015

Socially shared representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict: An exploration among conflict outsiders

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to explore the structures of socially shared representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict among conflict outsiders. The sample included Swiss residents with differing levels of self-positioning and engagement in the conflict (N = 31). We expected a 'spillover effect' of conflict representations from parties in conflicted societies to conflict outsiders. To assess these representations, a Q-methodological approach was used. The analysis revealed four distinct conflict representations, labeled as (1) a hawkishreligious pro-Israeli view; (2) a dovish pro-Israeli view; (3) a conciliatory view; and (4) a pro-Palestinian view. These representations provide evidence for a partial spillover of beliefs to conflict outsiders. The study contributes to the literature on discourses about the Israel-Palestine conflict by empirically discovering its socially shared, systematic structures.

Lea Stahel & Christopher Cohrs[1]

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Kurzfassung: Das Ziel dieser Studie bestand darin, die Strukturen sozial geteilter Repräsentationen des Israel-Palästina-Konflikts bei Außenstehenden zu explorieren, genauer gesagt bei Menschen aus der Schweiz mit unterschiedlichen Ausmaßen an Selbstpositionierung und Engagement im Konflikt (*N* = 31). Wir erwarteten eine Übertragung zentraler Überzeugungen und Konfliktrepräsentationen der gegensätzlichen Parteien des realen Konfliktkontexts auf Außenstehende. Für die Untersuchung dieser Repräsentationen wurde ein Q-methodologisch inspirierter Ansatz gewählt. Die Analyse enthüllt vier unterschiedliche Konfliktrepräsentationen, benannt als (1) die religiöskompromisslose pro-Israelische Sicht; (2) die gemäßigte pro-Israelische Sicht; (3) die kompromissbezogene Sicht und (4) die pro-Palästinensische Sicht. Die Studie trägt zur Literatur über Diskurse des Israel-Palästina-Konflikts insofern bei, als sie sozial geteilte Repräsentationen und deren Strukturen sowie Anhaltspunkte einer Übertragung von Konfliktrepräsentationen auf Konflikt-Außenstehende empirisch aufdeckt.

Abstract: The aim of this study was to explore the structures of socially shared representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict among conflict outsiders. The sample included Swiss residents with differing levels of self-positioning and engagement in the conflict (*N* = 31). We expected a 'spillover effect' of conflict representations from parties in conflicted societies to conflict outsiders. To assess these representations, a Q-methodological approach was used. The analysis revealed four distinct conflict representations, labeled as (1) a hawkishreligious pro-Israeli view; (2) a dovish pro-Israeli view; (3) a conciliatory view; and (4) a pro-Palestinian view. These representations provide evidence for a partial spillover of beliefs to conflict outsiders. The study contributes to the literature on discourses about the Israel-Palestine conflict by empirically discovering its socially shared, systematic structures.

1.   Introduction

Is the Israel-Palestine conflict a political, religious, or ethnic struggle? Which conflict parties' goals are legitimate and moral, which are not? Are we observing a system of Apartheid arising or is the widely-discussed Israeli occupation a myth? And who should we consider victims: the Palestinians, the Israelis, both, or none of them? For outsiders, conflicts may often be perplexing issues. Conflicts may be stable or unstable, fresh or protracted, constructive or destructive, violent or non-violent. Moreover, conflict constellations change dynamically, often in unpredictable ways (Jeong, 2010).

One example of such a highly complex conflict that is often considered prototypically intractable is currently taking place in Israel/Palestine (Coleman, 2004). For decades the source of explosive debates, the conflict repeatedly appears in the political arena of international actors and news media. As a stage for recurring outbreaks of violence and human rights violations on both conflict sides, the conflict has demanded a large material and psychological investment of the societies involved. Consequently, opposing conflict perspectives have emerged, captured in the terms of shared societal beliefs and ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2000) or master narratives (Hammack, 2008; Pappé & Jamil, 2010). Such clashing perspectives may not only manifest a strategy for adapting and coping with the conflict, but may contribute to the impediment of the conflict's settlement.

Conflicting narratives lead to recurrently contending and passionate argumentation not only between the conflicting parties (Bar-Tal, 2011). It can be expected that each side's ethos of conflict is also shared by conflict outsiders. Hereby, we define conflict outsiders as individuals who are not directly involved in the conflict in the sense of sharing the conflict's everyday reality. In terms of positioning, however, these individuals may range from neutral third parties to lobby or diaspora groups with certain interests in the conflict. With regard to the Israel-Palestine conflict, passionate argumentation within conflict outsiders can be observed in Germany and neighboring countries, for example, in heated debates about criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism (e.g., Kempf, 2010). Such heated debates are an indication that 'spillover effects' of belief systems are taking place: this is an effect where belief systems of parties in conflicted societies are adopted by ('spilling over to') unaffected conflict outsiders who identify with either of the conflict parties. A detailed analysis of conflict outsiders' perspectives may help to expose the existing diversity of conflict 'ethoses' and may contribute to a more understanding debate about the conflict in a non-conflict context. In addition, individuals' agreement with such 'ethoses' may predict opposition to, or support for, the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians (Ben Hagai et al., 2013). However, there is little systematic research available on conflict outsiders' representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Accordingly, the aim of our research was to explore the positions of Swiss residents with differing levels of self-positioning and engagement in the Israel-Palestine conflict. The neutral macro-institutional context of Switzerland was chosen because

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this may facilitate the existence and discovery of a variety of diverse –from neutral to strongly partisan – conflict representations on the individual micro-level (see below). We argue that positions toward the conflict are reflected in systematically shared representations across domains such as conflict labeling, conflict issues and dynamics, and solutions to the conflict. In addition, we explore some potential socio-demographic and psychological correlates of these representations.

In the following, we introduce concepts related to the socially shared representation of conflicts by people directly involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict and conflict outsiders. After outlining our research questions and methodological approach, we will present the structures of the discovered conflict representations in conflict outsiders.

2. Background

2.1 Socially shared representations of conflict

Since acting is conditioned on the subjective perception of a given situation, shared representations of a conflict might be as crucial as its facts. Kriesberg (1998: 2) acknowledges this significance of a subjective component of conflict by defining a social conflict as a situation where "two or more persons or groups manifest the belief that they have incompatible objectives". Thus, in line with the postmodern approach to conflict (Coleman, 2004), we expect that conflicts are less a result of material or structural factors such as limited resources, but more due to diverging senses of reality or social representations (Moscovici, 2001). Those representations are construed in the form of myths, narratives, or dominant societal discourses on the basis of long-term experiences (Hammack, 2008; Lederach, 1997) and reflect "shared understandings of identity, power, history, values, and utopian visions" (Seheni, 2002: 43). Such interpretative processes of selecting "some aspects of a perceived reality and (to) make them more salient in a communication context, in such way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation", are called *framing* by Entman (1993: 52).

Specifically in the context of intractable conflicts, framing processes may result in a so-called *ethos of conflict*, which denotes a set of *societal beliefs* (Bar-Tal, 2011). In the Jewish-Israeli ethos of conflict, dominant beliefs are, among others, beliefs in the justness of one's own goals, about delegitimizing the opponent, security, self-image, and self-victimization (Oren et al., 2004: 149; on ethos of conflict in the Palestinian society see Gayer, 2012; Nahhas, 2012). These beliefs may fulfill the function of providing a coherent and predictable picture of the conflict by explaining and legitimizing conflict policies and mobilizing actions (Bar-Tal, 2000, 2011). However, they may also contribute to the maintenance and escalation of the conflict (Bar-Tal et al., 2010). When investigating subjective framing in the Israel-Palestine conflict, one is soon confronted with at least two fundamentally differing (Israeli and Palestinian) conflict 'ethoses', "at least two memories, two sorts of historical invention, two sorts of geographical imagination" (Said, 2002: 248). These narratives work like mirror images, in that adversarial parties use the same kinds of self-justifications (Bar-Tal, 2011).

Not only groups living in the conflict, but also individuals sharing a common historical or cultural background, seem to inherit these 'ethoses'. A study on Jewish Americans found that individuals' opposition to reach a compromise in the Israel-Palestine conflict was predicted by beliefs that would indicate high scores on the ethos of conflict: a zero-sum and monolithic view on the conflict (acceptance of the Jewish-Israeli, and rejection of the Palestinian conflict narrative) as well as delegitimization of the opposing side (Ben Hagai et al., 2013).

2.2 The Israel-Palestine conflict as perceived by conflict outsiders

Although societal beliefs have so far been investigated mainly among societies directly involved in a conflict, we suggest that due to identification processes, even conflict outsiders may interpret the conflict in similar ways. According to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory, it is the subjective sense of identification with a group, rather than its objective membership, that predicts the adoption of group norms or shared reality frames.

Kempf (2011) has investigated how the Israel-Palestine conflict is represented and interpreted in conflict outsiders, namely Germans and Austrians. He builds on existing findings that not only people involved in conflicts, but also outsiders interpret and make sense of conflicts. Such interpretations develop within the context of war discourses (win-lose orientation) and peace discourses (win-win orientation) in media coverage of conflicts (ASPR, 2003). In his study, Kempf used the concept of mental models, which he defined as "a dynamic mental representation of a situation, an event or an object" with a cognitive and an emotional component (Dijk & Kintsch, 1983, cited by Kempf, 2011). Mental models of conflicts include (a) the conceptualization of a conflict as a win-win, win-lose, or lose-lose process, (b) the evaluation of the conflict parties' goals and rights, (c) the evaluation of the conflict parties' actions, and (d) the emotions accompanying these evaluations (for the role of emotions in the formation of beliefs, see also the concept of motivated skepticism; Ditto & Lopez, 1992). Kempf identified neutral frames, Israel-critical frames, pro-Palestinian peace frames (characterized by a critical attitude and both accentuation of needs and condemnation of violence of all conflict parties), a pro-Israeli war frame (characterized by

uncritical support and justification of violence of the Israeli side, and delegitimization of the Palestinian side), and a pro-Palestinian view bordering on a war frame. Greater familiarity with the conflict and emotional closeness was associated with more radical pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian (war) frames. On the basis of these findings, the questions arise of how strongly peace and war frames are pronounced in other social contexts and countries, and what distinctive, equivalent conflict representations may be found. Kempf's findings thus provided us with central components to be considered in our own investigation into outsiders' conflict representations. This includes the consideration of both emotional as well as cognitive components in the form of interrelated beliefs concerning goals, rights, and actions.

In addition to the investigation of Germans' and Austrians' mental models of the Israel-Palestine conflict (Kempf, 2011), Switzerland might serve as a particularly appropriate context for the exploration of such socially shared conflict representations. Switzerland's official policy towards both the Israeli and Palestinian sides is neutral. Simultaneously, the government upholds a special status in its active dialogue, mediation, and diverse exchange with all parties of the conflict (EDA, 2010). The Swiss credo of neutrality contrasts with most Western governments' positions. We assume that the neutrality of the Swiss institutional context facilitates the general development, spreading, and thus discovering of a high diversity of – neutral to strongly partisan – opinions on this conflict on the micro (individual) level. We attribute this to the relative lack of social desirability when expressing individual positions on this conflict.

Our assumption of the non-existence of one dominant public opinion in the Swiss context is supported by findings of a survey on the population's attitudes toward Jews, Israel, and the Israel-Palestine conflict (Longchamp et al., 2007). Carried out with 1030 representatively selected people, the survey concluded that the Swiss people's attitudes toward Israel are mixed, wavering between a rather positive image of Israel and a critical evaluation of its role in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Despite the study's lack of investigation into attitudes towards Palestinians, the mixed results point to an existence of diverse perspectives on this conflict. For our study then, the minimization of a macro-institutional bias in terms of partisanship towards a conflict party is a promising condition to discover a 'spillover effect' of conflict ethos from parties of the affected societies to conflict outsiders.

3.   The present research

The present research aims to explore socially shared representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict in conflict outsiders, specifically, Swiss residents. We define conflict representations as a multidimensional concept across three domains: (1) *Conflict labeling*, (2) *Conflict issues and dynamics*, and (3) *Solution process*. These domains were created based on an eclectic approach to conflict analysis that integrated models like framing (Entman, 1993), societal beliefs (Bar-Tal, 2011), mental models (Kempf, 2011), and the practice of labelling people, actions, and events (Peteet, 2005). While reviewing literature on the Israel-Palestine conflict in particular, the suggested three domains evolved to be central, distinct dimensions along which this conflict has been framed in the past. We suggest that from a discursive perspective these dimensions should be treated separately as they happen on distinct levels, as illuminated in the following.

C*onflict labels* summarize the wholeness of a conflict in an abstract umbrella term (e.g. *Occupation* or *Apartheid*). Simultaneously, this dimension constitutes the subjective nature of the conflict or, alternatively, defines along which criteria an outsider interprets the conflict (e.g. *Political conflict* or *Religious conflict*). The dimension *Issues and dynamics* as a second, separate dimension of the conflict deals with the concrete evaluation of parties' actions and policies at the present. The third dimension, *Solution process,* deals with future, hypothetical assumptions in regard to expected or desired outcomes of the conflict and how such a solution should be addressed. To investigate differentiated representations of conflict along these three domains requires distinct ways of assessing them (see instructions of the study in the *Q sorting* section). Overall, we expected that distinct representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict are characterized by systematic combinations of viewpoints across these three domains.

Specifically, the present research aims a) to identify competing, shared conflict representations and their commonalities and differences, b) to investigate whether, in their extreme forms, 'mirror images' would exist, and c) to explore socio-psychological correlates of particular conflict representations. As potential socio-psychological correlates that could help to contextualize the different socially shared conflict representations, we included general information such as participants' gender, political and religious affiliation, self-assessed familiarity with the conflict, and emotional closeness to the conflict (assessed as self-reported empathy as well as personal and physical contact with the conflict parties or the conflict area). Overall, the approach of this study reaches beyond existing surveys of conflict outsiders' opinions on the conflict (such as Longchamp et al.'s, 2007): not the prevalence of single beliefs within a population is examined, but the structures of the existent diverging perspectives (or set of beliefs) on the conflict as a whole are qualitatively explored.

3.1 Method

Due to the complex nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict, an approach informed by Q methodology was used to examine its socially shared representations (see Brown, 1993; Stephenson, 1953; Watts & Stenner, 2005). Q methodology is particularly useful for the present research because (a) its qualitative component enables the clarification of shared viewpoints of different people concerning highly complex concepts, by identifying and grouping together individuals that make sense of the phenomenon in similar ways; (b) its quantitative component examines whether shared viewpoints are bipolar (diametrically opposed 'mirror images') or unipolar, and identifies elements of disagreement and agreement across viewpoints with factor analysis or principal component analysis (Durning, 2005; Watts & Stenner, 2005).

Q methodology includes a process of sorting a set of statements. As regards content, the set reflects the entirety of positions vis-à-vis the phenomenon in question. Every statement represents a subjective opinion on the phenomenon (Webler et al., 2009). Because there are a myriad of possible sorting patterns, this technique is highly suitable to operationalize an individual's subjective, holistic viewpoint, and to identify the 'social sharedness' of viewpoints.

3.2 Participants

Q-methodological studies do not necessarily require a representative or large sample. They rather aim for a maximization of diverse, heterogeneous positions on the phenomenon in question (Watts & Stenner, 2005). The present sample included 31 participants residing in Switzerland. We aimed for a strategic selection of participants from which we assumed maximum diversity of perspectives on the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The first portion of our sample included actively engaged individuals with explicit self-positioning in the conflict. Specifically, we approached popular, rather opposing, Swiss activist groups in regard to the Israel-Palestine conflict. One goal was to include opinion-leaders, as they, with a high chance, represent socially shared representations. We thus recruited one former president of each organization. Then, through snowballing, we got access to other organizational members (resulting in five participants supporting the Israeli side and three participants supporting the Palestinian side) and activists outside these organizations (two participants). To also include primarily religiously motivated participants, we recruited church representatives (a rabbi and a pastor) and their community members (three participants).

The second portion of our sample included a contrasting group: 'lay' individuals whose representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict we assumed to be more representative of the Swiss population (seven students, nine professionals). We defined lay participants as not being involved in any engagement towards the conflict as an activist, a professional, or a donor for a relevant NGO. The exclusive selection criterion was the participants' self-articulated interest in and some familiarity with the conflict, because a minimum level of conflict knowledge was found to be necessary for holding an interpretive conflict frame (Kempf, 2011). These participants were recruited both through placing an ad on a University's website and through snowballing.

For identifying as many existing and differing viewpoints as possible, Dryzek and Berejikian (1993) suggest the maximization of social, political, and religious diversity. Accordingly, 55% of our total sample was Christian, 10% Jewish, 8% Muslim, and 27% had no religious affiliation. Participants' political orientation, indicated on a scale from 1 (*strongly left-wing*) to 7 (*strongly right-wing*), ranged from 1 to 5 ($M = 3.36$). Age ranged from 23 to 80 years, 72% were male and 28% female. 58% of the participants had been to Israel, and 45% to the Palestinian territories (West Bank and/or Gaza).

3.3 Procedure and materials

In the study process, participants were first asked to fill out a short questionnaire on socio-psychological characteristics. Then, in the main phase, participants engaged in a process called *Q sorting*. This process involved the sorting of three sets of statements (*Q sets*) into quasi-normal distributions *(Q sort diagrams)* (see below).

3.3.1 Generation of statements (Q Sets)

For the generation of the three Q sets, we first collected a pool of about 300 opinions on the Israel-Palestine conflict from diverse sources, such as online fora and opinionated articles (see, e.g., Halper et al., 2009). The statements were allocated to theoretical conflict dimensions within academically based conflict frameworks, such as conflict label, parties' interests, dynamics, relations, means used, or solutions (Kriesberg, 1998; Peteet, 2005; Wehr, 2006). This systematic organization ensured the statements to approximate a representative reflection of discourses on the Israel-Palestine conflict, and reduced the influence of researcher biases on the scope of possible viewpoints (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

In a second step, the conflict dimensions were narrowed down to three domains, which we assumed to represent the essence of conflict representations in line with the aforementioned models of conflict analysis (Bar-Tal, 2011; Entman, 1993; Kempf, 2011; Peteet, 2005): *Conflict Label*, *Issues and Dynamics*, and *Solution Process* (see the Appendix for the domains'

structure and themes). These domains were covered by 22, 29, and 25 statements, respectively. Their final selection was guided by the goal of a balanced coverage of heterogeneous perspectives (Webler et al., 2009). Statements were scrutinized by a few individuals knowledgeable in the conflict to ensure non-redundancy, clarity, and comparability. Finally, each statement was translated to German to adjust to the Swiss context and subsequently printed on a separate card.

3.3.2   Q sorting

Since it would be difficult for participants to directly compare and evaluate the large number of (around 75) statements from the three different domains on one common psychological dimension, the process and specific instructions for the Q sorting were done separately for each domain (Q set). For each Q set, the participants were first asked to arrange the cards into three piles of similar size to allow an initial comparison of the statements: one pile for those statements a participant agreed with, one for those he/she disagreed with, and one for statements considered irrelevant or eliciting no clear view (Watts & Stenner, 2005). In a second step, participants were asked to sort the statements into a forced quasi-normal distribution, according to relative agreement or disagreement, on the basis of their *psychological significance* for the participant. For the domain *Conflict Label*, participants were asked to sort 22 cards according to how characteristic they considered the labels to be for the Israel-Palestine conflict. There were seven sorting categories ranging from most characteristic (+3) to most uncharacteristic (-3). For *Issues and Dynamics*, the participants were asked to sort 29 cards into nine categories ranging from most agree (+4) to most disagree (-4). For *Solution Process*, participants were asked to sort 25 statements according to how promising the proposals seemed for the solution of the conflict ranging from most agree (+4) to most disagree (-4). In each case, the middle category (0) was said to indicate relative irrelevance or lack of opinion. The resulting configurations – in the form of Q sorts – represent each participant's subjective, holistic, and contextualized representation of the conflict domains. After completing each Q sort, the participants were allowed to comment on their statements sorted into the most positive and most negative response categories. This additional information was used to assist the researchers' interpretation of the resulting viewpoints.

3.4   Analysis

For the analysis in Q methodology, a by-person factor analysis or principal component analysis of the Q sorts is carried out. Through extraction and rotation, a number of factors or components are revealed.[1] Each resulting factor represents a viewpoint vis-à-vis the Israel-Palestine conflict, shared by the participants whose sorts load on it. Factor loadings represent the correlations of a Q sort (a participant) with the factors. For each factor, an idealized (prototypical) Q sort is computed through a weighted aggregation of the highly loading (defining) sorts. This idealized sort represents the ordering of statements for a hypothetical individual with a loading of 1 on that particular factor (Brown, 1993). Positively correlated factors reveal commonality between viewpoints, negatively correlated factors reveal opposing and potentially conflicting viewpoints (Durning, 2005).

There is no clear strategy for how to handle data from separate Q sorts. The most common strategy would be to analyze the Q sorts separately, and then examine whether there are interrelations between the solutions for the three domains, either statistically through correlations (e.g., Conover & Feldman, 1984), or by inspecting whether the same participants load on the same factors across the separate Q sorts (e.g., Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1990). However, both variants represent an analysis at the *between*-participants level and "destroy" the relations across the three domains *within* participants. The findings would thus be influenced by the variation that happens to exist in the sample of participants.

A potentially superior strategy would be to rotate the factors of the separate Q sorts jointly; however, there is currently no established technical procedure for this. As an approximation, we opted for an integrated analysis that combines the Q-sort data across the three domains into one dataset (see Klaus et al., 2010, for a similar approach). Note that the combined sorting patterns can only be meaningful if there are good reasons to assume that a participant's "voice" can be heard consistently across the different domains (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1990; see also Uluğ & Cohrs, 2014). We do have good reasons for this: theoretically because of the models of conflict analysis that we employed (Bar-Tal, 2011; Entman, 1993; Kempf, 2011; Peteet, 2005), and empirically because factors derived from separate analyses for the three domains could be rotated to highly similar solutions.[2]

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1.   In the Q-methodological literature the term "factor" is generally used, even when principal components have been extracted and rotated. We follow this terminological convention here, but talk about "components" when describing our own analysis and results, and about "viewpoints" when referring to the interpretation.
2.   For each of the three domains, we extracted four principal components and used orthogonal Procrustes rotation (see McCrae et al., 1996) to replicate the component loading matrix of the integrated solution as closely as possible. Total congruence coefficients were .90 for *Conflict Label*, .92 for *Issues and Dynamics*, and .89 for *Solution Process*. Congruence of at least .80, preferably over .90, is indicative of conceptual similarity between factors or components (Barrett, 1986). These results show that the participants' "voices" were rather consistent across the three domains. We thus believe that our integrated analysis is a simple and valid alternative to doing separate analyses with subsequent rotations in a common factor/component space. Note that the idealized Q sorts on which the interpretation rests (see below) are *not* influenced by whether domains are combined or analyzed separately.

The data were analyzed using the free PQMethod 2.11 package (Schmolck & Atkinson, 2002). The three separate Q sorts were combined for an integrated analysis.[1] Factors/components were extracted using Principal Component Analysis; rotation used the Varimax criterion (Watts & Stenner, 2005).[2] We decided on the final number of components using a combination of criteria (Webler et al., 2009): Simplicity (fewer factors/components are better), clarity (minimizing multiple loaders and non-loaders), distinctiveness (lower correlations between factors/components are better), and stability (preserving groups of sorts repeatedly loading together).

4.   Results

A four-component solution was deemed optimal: sufficiently comprehensive and well interpretable (and explaining 66% of the total amount of variance). A further splitting would not have contributed to a significantly increased understanding of the issue. Twenty-four of the participants' sorts loaded clearly on one of the four components. The remaining seven participants could not be allocated to a specific shared viewpoint, as they had multiple loadings on more than one component, thus reflecting combinations of the prototypical views.

In the following, each component or viewpoint is presented in terms of a label and a narrative. The structure of the narratives is guided by inspecting the component scores of the idealized Q sorts (with particular consideration of the most highly and most lowly ranked statements), as well as the consensual statements (statements that were ranked similarly across any pair of components) and distinguishing statements (statements that were ranked significantly differently) (Webler et al., 2009). Open comments from the participants are incorporated into the narratives and cited literally. The viewpoints' presentation goes from a (1) *Hawkish-religious pro-Israeli view* to a (2) *Dovish pro-Israeli view*, a (3) *Conciliatory view*, and finally a (4) *Pro-Palestinian view* (see the Appendix for the complete list of statements' z-scores, which indicate how extreme [positive or negative] a statement would be ranked by a hypothetical person that perfectly represents the respective component).

In regard to the correlations between the idealized, prototypical Q sorts for each component, Table 1 shows that the highest level of consensus was found between Components 2 and 3 ($r = .64$). Components 1 and 4, in contrast, were most dissimilar from each other ($r = -.51$), and thus represent the highest conflict potential.

	C1	C2	C3
C2	.38		
C3	.18	.64	
C4	-.51	.13	.33

Table 1: Correlations of component scores

4.1   Viewpoint 1: Hawkish-Religious pro-Israeli representation (F1)

This component had three defining Q sorts (two males, one female), with loadings between .50 and .75. One participant belonged to an Israel-supporting organization and two were members of church communities (all Christian). Their emotional concern for the conflict ranged from modest to very high. All had been to Israel. Across all 31 participants, loadings on this component correlated with a right-wing political orientation ($r = .38$), and stronger empathy for Israelis ($r = .72$), not having Palestinian acquaintances ($r = -.58$) nor been to the Palestinian territories ($r = -.36$).[3]

According to this viewpoint, the Israel-Palestine conflict is mainly a religious conflict, with Israel – the only democracy in the Middle East – in self-defense (see Table 2 for z-scores of the four most positively and four most negatively ranked statements for each domain). The conflict is global and existential in nature, because "if Israel does not defend itself against the Arabs, who deny the right of existence to Israel, Israel will cease to exist." Palestinian terrorism as "highly unjustifiable

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1.   To ensure that the *Conflict Label* domain (for which fewer categories were used, ranging from -3 to +3 instead of -4 to +4) had the same influence on the components as the other two domains, the separate Q sorts were transformed in such a way that they had the same range (i.e., from -12 to +12; or, more precisely, because PQMethod cannot handle response categories that require three character spaces, from 0 to 24; this does not affect the results in any way).

2.   We decided for Principal Component (instead of Centroid) extraction because it is purely descriptive, without assuming that the factors (components) represent underlying constructs, and for Varimax (instead of theoretical/manual) rotation because there were no strong theoretical grounds on which we could specify particular cases as targets for rotation.

3.   Due to the small sample size and purposive sampling strategy, we remind readers that the analyses of correlations between the component loadings and other variables are of descriptive character. The relationships presented here cannot be generalised and can only cautiously be used to contextualize the different viewpoints.

acts" is a salient aspect. Palestinians are seeking neither justice nor peace, as "their [Arabs'] motivation is world domination over Jews and Christians and consequently war." Muslims thus strive for a Holocaust and "the extermination of the Israeli people", "according to the Muslims' religious and cultural assumptions." This has to be prevented with all means. Israel thus is the primary victim in the conflict and mainly seeking for security and the right for self-determination.

		Statements	C1	C2	C3	C4
Conflict label	(2)	Religious conflict	1.79	-0.14	2.07	-1.30
	(20)	Israeli self-defence	1.74	1.96	0.21	-1.38
	(11)	Global conflict	**1.56**	-0.56	0.44	-0.10
	(6)	Existential conflict	**1.52**	2.30	0.23	-0.31
	(3)	Imperialist conflict	-0.93	-0.34	0.06	0.43
	(14)	Occupation	**-1.40**	0.57	0.63	1.52
	(22)	Israeli aggression	**-1.78**	-0.61	-0.75	0.99
	(18)	Israeli state terrorism	**-1.96**	-0.97	-1.02	0.88
Issues and dynamics	(29)	Israel seeks security	1.45	2.05	1.31	-0.17
	(50)	Muslims want a Holocaust	**1.45**	-1.05	-1.31	-1.99
	(37)	The Land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river belongs exclusively to the Jews	**1.25**	-1.02	-1.54	-1.79
	(39)	Most criticism of Israel is anti-semitically motivated	**1.25**	-0.54	-0.48	-1.20
	(24)	Palestinian's goal is peace between two people	**-1.48**	0.01	-0.04	0.15
	(41)	Zionism is a form of racism	-1.58	-0.86	-1.22	1.19
	(49)	Jews are doing the same with the Palestinians what was done to themselves in the Holocaust	-1.82	-2.22	-0.66	-0.31
	(36)	The Land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river belongs exclusively to the Palestinians	-2.10	-1.49	-1.63	-0.46
Solution process	(68)	Jerusalem should belong to the Jews	**1.61**	-0.55	-0.54	-1.39
	(74)	Jews deserve a Jewish state	**1.36**	0.29	0.13	-0.75
	(55)	A solution must take into account the necessities of both populations	0.73	0.63	1.89	0.78
	(54)	First priority have the Israelis for living a peaceful future	0.70	0.22	-0.75	-0.06
	(69)	Jerusalem should be divided between Jews and Palestinians	**-1.11**	0.37	0.58	0.50
	(58)	There is no middle ground solution: at the end, only the Israeli or the Palestinian people will remain	-1.28	-2.01	-1.36	-0.69
	(72)	A two-state solution (Israel and Palestine)	**-1.29**	1.27	0.93	0.53
	(67)	Jerusalem should belong to the Palestinians	**-1.71**	-0.72	-0.50	-0.36

Notes. The statements with most agreement (most positive z-scores) and most disagreement (most negative z-scores) are listed. Numbers in bold refer to distinguishing statements for C1 (significant at $p < .05$). Statement numbers are in brackets. Refer also to the complete list statements in the Appendix.

Table 2: Z-scores of statements for Hawkish-religious pro-Israeli representation (C1)

In terms of actions, no aggressive motivation on the part of Israel is perceived. Comparison of Israeli policies against Palestinians with the Holocaust "may not and must not" be made, as "the Jews/Israel do not plan a mass extermination of the Palestinians." Such a comparison is thus "anti-Semitic and dangerous." In general, most criticism concerning Israel's policies is anti-Semitically motivated. There is no Israeli occupation – the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River (both Israel and the West Bank) has "historically and religiously always belonged to the Jews." Consequently, a central claim in the solution process is that none of this land should belong to the Palestinians or be divided. A one-state solution is supported as "the only possibility for peace, because God has promised this land to its people (Jews). However, God supports the 'strangers' too. They may live in Israel as well." A two-state solution is strongly rejected, as "Palestinians and all Muslims would have even more possibilities to attack and eliminate Israel."

Overall, this representation lends partial support a win-lose attitude, advocating a conflict solution mostly at the cost of the adversary (Kempf, 2011). This perspective shows the greatest opposition to the pro-Palestinian view (F4). This opposition

is manifested not only in the opposing beliefs, but also in the subjective dimension of time on which the conflict was evaluated. In F4, the earliest point of reference in order to justify a position or fix the conflict's roots was traced back to 1948, the creation of Israel. In F1, in contrast, it was traced back to 4000 BC.

4.2 Viewpoint 2: Dovish pro-Israeli representation (F2)

Component 2 had seven defining Q sorts (five males and two females), with loadings between .52 and .77. It included four members of an Israel-supporting organization, one student, and two professionals. Two were Jewish, three Christian, and two had no religious affiliation. Emotional concern for the conflict ranged from low to high. Six had been to Israel and five to the Palestinian territories. Five had Israeli acquaintances. Loadings on this component correlated with a right-wing political orientation ($r = .46$, stronger empathy for Israelis ($r = .55$), weaker empathy for Palestinians ($r = -.46$), and not having Palestinian acquaintances ($r = -.48$).

		Statements	C1	C2	C3	C4
Conflict label	(6)	Existential conflict	1.52	**2.30**	0.23	-0.31
	(20)	Israeli self-defence	1.74	1.96	0.21	-1.38
	(1)	Political conflict	0.56	1.40	1.42	0.72
	(17)	Palestinian terrorism	1.03	0.81	-1.04	-1.30
	(12)	Apartheid	-0.70	-0.96	-0.55	1.71
	(18)	Israeli state terrorism	-1.96	-0.97	-1.02	0.88
	(15)	Ethnic cleansing	-0.44	-2.18	-1.96	1.47
	(16)	Genocide	-0.80	**-2.33**	-1.52	-0.46
Issues and dynamics	(29)	Israel seeks security	1.45	2.05	1.31	-0.17
	(51)	A second Holocaust has to be prevented at all costs	0.98	1.44	1.27	0.50
	(43)	Jewish people in Israel have a right to self-determination	1.14	1.41	0.89	0.23
	(40)	Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East	1.17	1.41	0.35	-0.71
	(37)	The Land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river belongs exclusively to the Jews	1.25	**-1.02**	-1.54	-1.79
	(50)	Muslims want a Holocaust	1.45	-1.05	-1.31	-1.99
	(36)	The Land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river belongs exclusively to the Palestinians	-2.10	-1.49	-1.63	-0.46
	(49)	Jews are doing the same with the Palestinians what was done to themselves in the Holocaust	-1.82	-2.22	-0.66	-0.31
Solution process	(52)	A just and lasting peace between Israelis and the Palestinians is possible	0.06	1.44	0.12	1.22
	(55)	A just solution to the conflict should be found through negotiation	0.05	1.27	1.11	0.44
	(72)	A two-state solution (Israel and Palestine)	-1.29	1.27	0.93	0.53
	(60)	Recognition of mutual identity and rights***	0.51	1.19	1.34	0.91
	(73)	A one-state solution	0.62	-0.95	-0.83	1.39
	(56)	Annexation of the West Bank and Gaza into a Jewish state	0.62	-1.07	-0.84	-1.34
	(71)	The Palestinians should go to live in the surrounding Arab states	0.01	-1.27	-1.38	-1.90
	(58)	There is no middle ground solution: at the end, only the Israeli or the Palestinian people will remain	-1.28	**-2.01**	-1.36	-0.69

Notes. The statements with most agreement (most positive z-scores) and most disagreement (most negative z-scores) are listed. Numbers in bold refer to distinguishing statements for C2 (significant at $p < .05$). *** indicates consensus statements across all components (non-significant at $p > .01$). Statement numbers are in brackets. Refer also to the complete list of statements in the Appendix.

Table 3: Z-scores of statements of Dovish pro-Israeli representation (C2)

In this perspective, the conflict is mainly existential, with "Christianity and Judaism against Islam" and a "struggle for survival, because the [Israel's] neighboring states have officially threatened Israel with extermination" (see Table 3 for statements' z-scores). It is also a political conflict, with Israel – the only democracy in the Middle East – in self-defense. In

contrast to F1, an Israeli occupation indeed exists. Jewish-Israelis are mainly seeking security, recognition, and respect. They have the right of self-determination ("justified due to pogroms"), which is granted the Palestinians too. A second Holocaust has to be prevented by any means. However, it is not believed that Muslims want a Holocaust - such accusations represented "Islamophobia and untenable generalization." With a strong conviction, the conflict is not characterized by genocide ("pure propaganda"), ethnic cleansing, Israeli state terrorism, and apartheid ("not applicable, because Israel is a democratic and secular state"). Further, comparisons of Israeli actions against Palestinians with acts done to the Jewish people in the Holocaust must not be made.

Concerning the solution process, it is strongly believed in a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, which "should be much more discussed and written about instead of emphasizing the obstacles." All the land neither belongs exclusively to the Jewish people nor to the Palestinians. Further, Jewish settlements in the West Bank are not justified. A two-state solution should be achieved through negotiations, with high importance of recognizing mutual identity and rights. A one-state solution is a threat to Israel, as it "meant the factual end of Israel as the home of the Jews due to demography issues, particularly when the right of return of Palestinians to Israel is granted." Overall, this perspective is relatively compromising, and compared to F1, less radical in terms of supporting Jewish-Israeli claims exclusively.

4.3 Viewpoint 3: Conciliatory representation (F3)

Conflict label		Statements	C1	C2	**C3**	C4
Conflict label	(2)	Religious conflict	1.79	-0.14	2.07	-1.30
	(1)	Political conflict	0.56	1.40	1.42	0.72
	(4)	Ethnic conflict	0.33	-0.11	**1.26**	-0.87
	(19)	Palestinian self-defence struggle	-0.70	0.73	0.68	0.94
	(17)	Palestinian terrorism	1.03	0.81	-1.04	-1.30
	(9)	Class conflict	-0.53	0.21	-1.05	-0.19
	(16)	Genocide	-0.80	-2.33	**-1.52**	-0.46
	(15)	Ethnic cleansing	-0.44	-2.18	-1.96	1.47
Issues and dynamics	(35)	The assertion by force over religious claims only perpetuates the conflict	0.00	0.66	**1.67**	0.12
	(25)	Palestinians seek recognition and respect	-0.06	0.48	1.52	1.26
	(31)	Israels military operations against the Palestinians are exorbitant	-0.70	-0.45	**1.51**	0.61
	(29)	Israel seeks security	1.45	2.05	1.31	-0.17
	(50)	Muslims want a Holocaust	1.45	-1.05	-1.31	-1.99
	(37)	The Land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river belongs exclusively to the Jews	1.25	-1.02	-1.54	-1.79
	(38)	Jews opposed to the Occupation are anti-Israel and self-hating	0.31	-0.46	-1.57	-1.11
	(36)	The Land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river belongs exclusively to the Palestinians	-2.10	-1.49	-1.63	-0.46
Solution process	(55)	A solution must take into account the necessities of both populations	0.73	0.63	**1.89**	0.78
	(63)	Stopping spiral of violence	-0.19	-0.09	**1.67**	0.16
	(60)	Recognition of mutual identity and rights***	0.51	1.19	1.34	0.91
	(59)	A just solution to the conflict should be found through negotiation	0.05	1.27	1.11	0.44
	(57)	Israel shall fight Palestinian terrorism with full force	0.44	-0.08	-1.15	-1.07
	(66)	The current state of the conflict should be maintained	-0.43	-0.91	-1.35	-0.73
	(58)	There is no middle ground solution: at the end, only the Israeli or the Palestinian people will remain	-1.28	-2.01	-1.36	-0.69
	(71)	The Palestinians should go to live in the surrounding Arab states	0.01	-1.27	-1.38	-1.90

Notes. The statements with most agreement (most positive z-scores) and most disagreement (most negative z-scores) are listed. Numbers in bold refer to distinguishing statements for C3 (significant at $p < .05$). *** indicates consensus statements across all components (non-significant at $p > .01$). Statement numbers are in brackets. Refer also to the complete list of statements in the Appendix.

Table 4: Z-scores of statements of conciliatory representation (C3)

Component 3 had seven defining Q sorts (five males and two females), with loadings between .56 and .82. In was repre-sented by five students and two professionals (no affiliations to solidarity groups). Four were Christian and three had no religious affiliation. Political orientation ranged evenly from strongly left-wing to right-wing, empathy with the Israeli side was low to modest, and with the Palestinian side modest to high. Loadings on this component correlated with less emotional concern with the conflict ($r = -.41$), having neither Israeli ($r = -.45$) nor Palestinian acquaintances ($r = -.46$), and having neither been to Israel ($r = -.66$) nor the Palestinian territories ($r = -.51$).

This viewpoint corresponds most closely to a so-called conciliatory attitude, which is defined as a conflict attitude open to recognition and negotiation, and less demanding (Kaplowitz, 1976). Here, the conflict is mainly political, "as the allocation of Israel to the Jews resulted from political powers without the consideration of the originally domiciled population, and is still influenced by (international) political powers" (see Table 4 for statements' z-scores). Further, it has an ethnic and re-ligious component "because both conflict parties refer to their religious roots to legitimize action." However, the assertion by force over religious claims only perpetuates the conflict, as "religious convictions do not allow negotiation." On a less salient level, it is a colonial conflict and a clash of civilizations. In terms of actions, this perspective avoids the conflict to be characterized by conflict labels which imply violent action (such as *ethnic cleansing*), or which define an aggressor (such as *Palestinian terrorism*), as "there is no good and bad side, for both sides it is more about self-defense rather than exter-mination of the other." As an exception, Israel's military operations against Palestinians are considered exorbitant and the Israeli wall not justified. In terms of the parties' goals, Israelis are perceived as seeking security, recognition, and respect. The latter two motivations, however, are even more strongly ascribed to the Palestinians. Neither are Muslims striving for a Holocaust, nor is Zionism racism. Zionism is "more about the identity of Jews and their aspiration for their own land rather than directed against the Palestinians." Compared to all perspectives, this representation is least concerned with the, often contested, Jewish nature of the state of Israel.

In the solution process, the necessities of both people have to be taking into account. Importantly, the spiral of violence should be stopped ("there is no military solution for the conflict"). Central are as well negotiations, the recognition of mutual identities and rights, and reducing glorification of violence. A two-state solution is considered possible "on the condition that both parties may equally negotiate about the conditions." A middle ground solution is possible: as the land belongs to both people, Palestinians should e.g. not be forced to migrate (similar solution approach as F2).

Overall, this conflict representation reduces the conflict to its mere existence while avoiding deliberately taking sides or assigning responsibility. By adopting a win-win conceptualization of the conflict (Deutsch, 1973), mutual needs and non-violent strategies are emphasized.

4.4 Viewpoint 4: Pro-Palestinian Representation (F4)

Component 4 had seven defining Q sorts (six males and one female), with loadings between .59 and .88. It represented three members of Palestine solidarity groups, two independent activists, and two professionals. Three were Christian, one Muslim, and three had no religious affiliation. Emotional concern for the conflict was high to very high. All but one had both Israeli and Palestinian acquaintances and had been both to Israel and the Palestinian territories. Loadings on this compo-nent correlated with a left-wing political orientation ($r = -.56$), weaker empathy for Israelis ($r = -.88$), more empathy for Palestinians ($r = .60$), having Palestinian acquaintances ($r = .74$), and having been to the Palestinian territories ($r = .44$).

This perspective is dominated by Israel as the aggressive party in the conflict (see Table 5 for statements' z-scores). Most centrally, apartheid is "taking place within the borders of 1967 [West Bank]." Along "racist criteria", the "separation wall is fulfilling this component of dividing race" and is "just one component of the act of Jewish colonialism in this conflict area." Beside Israeli aggression and the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population, occupation is the "core of the problem" and exists "not just since 1967, but since 1948, the year of the creation of the state of Israel." Relatedly, Zionism is a form of racism "in its preference of one group over another and consequent exclusion of the other." Similarly, the democratic nature of Israel is contested, as "a Jewish state *per se* cannot be democratic." Consistent with this primarily political conflict conceptualization, this view regards the conflict as neither religious in nature nor a (cultural) clash of civilizations.

In terms of conflict dynamics, Israel is not acting in self-defense. In contrast, Palestinians fight a self-defense struggle in their efforts for justice, recognition, respect, and, most importantly, their right to self-determination. Their war of liberation is thus legitimate. As they are the primary victims or "weaker part in the conflict", terrorist acts are least disapproved com-pared to all other perspectives. However, terms such as *terrorism* or *aggression* for Palestinian violence are opposed and perceived as having been "misused as a politically delegitimizing slogan." Accordingly, the belief of Muslims wanting a Ho-locaust is "reversed anti-Semitism and polemic."

There is a strong belief in a just and lasting peace in this conflict. A one-state solution has highest priority as the "only lasting solution". All Israel, Palestine, and Jerusalem should be divided between Jews and Palestinians. In this process, Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and the Israeli wall/security fence, are strongly opposed. Further, the Palestinian

refugees should have right of return. Consequently, an emigration of Palestinians to surrounding Arab states is strongly rejected, because "a just solution cannot be achieved by creating another injustice [displacement]." In general, criticism of Israel should be approved, as it is mostly not anti-Semitically motivated.

		Statements	C1	C2	C3	**C4**
Conflict label	(12)	Apartheid	-0.70	-0.96	-0.55	**1.71**
	(14)	Occupation	-1.40	0.57	0.63	**1.52**
	(15)	Ethnic cleansing	-0.44	-2.18	-1.96	**1.47**
	(7)	Colonial conflict	-0.75	-0.27	0.61	**1.25**
	(17)	Palestinian terrorism	1.03	0.81	-1.04	**-1.30**
	(2)	Religious conflict	1.79	-0.14	2.07	**-1.30**
	(20)	Israeli self-defence	1.74	1.96	0.21	-1.38
	(21)	Palestinian aggression	0.71	0.21	-0.83	**-1.75**
Issues and dynamics	(44)	Palestinians have a right to self-determination	-0.43	1.35	0.55	**2.02**
	(33)	Palestinians' war of liberation is legitimate	-0.77	0.43	0.75	**1.87**
	(25)	Palestinians seek recognition and respect	-0.06	0.48	1.52	1.26
	(41)	Zionism is a form of racism	-1.58	-0.86	-1.22	**1.19**
	(47)	Israeli Wall / Security Fence is justified	0.30	0.54	-0.72	**-1.38**
	(48)	Jewish settlements in the West Bank are justified	0.67	-0.91	-0.80	-1.38
	(37)	The Land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river belongs exclusively to the Jews	1.25	-1.02	-1.54	-1.79
	(50)	Muslims want a Holocaust	1.45	-1.05	-1.31	**-1.99**
Solution process	(70)	The refugees should be given the right to return	-0.63	-0.45	0.51	**1.46**
	(73)	A one-state solution	0.62	-0.95	-0.83	**1.39**
	(52)	A just and lasting peace between Israelis and the Palestinians is possible	0.06	1.44	0.12	1.22
	(60)	Recognition of mutual identity and rights***	0.51	1.19	1.34	0.91
	(57)	Israel shall fight Palestinian terrorism with full force	0.44	-0.08	-1.15	-1.07
	(56)	Annexation of the West Bank and Gaza into a Jewish state	0.62	-1.07	-0.84	-1.34
	(68)	Jerusalem should belong to the Jews	1.61	-0.55	-0.54	**-1.39**
	(71)	The Palestinians should go to live in the surrounding Arab states	0.01	-1.27	-1.38	**-1.90**

Notes. The statements with most agreement (most positive z-scores) and most disagreement (most negative z-scores) are listed. Numbers in bold refer to distinguishing statements for C4 (significant at $p < .05$). *** indicates consensus statements across all components (non-significant at $p > .01$). Statement numbers are in brackets. Refer also to the complete list of statements in the Appendix.

Table 5: Z-scores of Statements of Pro-Palestinian Representation (C4)

5.   Discussion

5.1   Summary of results

The aim of this study was to investigate the existing landscape and structure of socially shared representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict among conflict outsiders, namely Swiss residents. We examined how the conflict is labeled, how various issues and conflict dynamics are evaluated, and what conflict solutions are supported.

Four qualitatively distinct viewpoints or conflict representations were discovered: (1) a religious conflict representation by the hawkish-religious pro-Israeli view, with Israeli self-defense and Palestinian aggression, high salience of security and the Holocaust, and exclusive claim of Israel/Palestine for the Jewish people in a one-state solution; (2) an existential-political conflict representation by the dovish pro-Israeli view, with Israel in self-defense and self-determination for both the Jewish and Palestinians people, a strong belief in peace, and a negotiated two-state solution; (3) a relatively balanced, political-religious-ethnic conflict representation of the conciliatory view, with high salience of abstract human rights princi-

ples; and (4) a political-colonial conflict representation of the pro-Palestinian view, with Palestinians as the primary victims in a system of Israeli Apartheid and occupation, and a one-state as the "only lasting" solution.

In the following section, we first discuss the existence of a coherent logic in the resulting conflict representations. Relatedly, we point out the structured nature of the representations and the occurrence of hybrid views. In a next step, we relate the discovered representations to previous research on mental models of the Israel-Palestine conflict and similar concepts such as societal beliefs and mirror images. Finally, we provide limitations and suggestions for future research, as well as implications for conflict resolution.

5.2 The internal logic of conflict representations

Our study provides evidence of an alternative way (see Bar-Tal, 2011) to empirically explore an internal logic or interrelatedness of beliefs in regard to the Israel-Palestine conflict. This suggested logic manifests in the systematic and coherent 'wholes' of the resulting representations across all conflict domains (*conflict labels*, *issues and dynamics, solution process*).

The internal logic of representations is exemplified on how conflict labels seem to predict conflict evaluation. Conflict evaluation includes justification for claims, distribution of rights, and attitude towards solution (see Peteet, 2005). Following a political conflict nature, the pro-Palestinian view, for example, evaluates territorial claims according to international law and stresses the importance of a democratic solution. Following a religious nature, in contrast, the hawkish-religious pro-Israeli view claims Israel and Palestine to be given by God, thus to be ruled exclusively by the Jewish people. Peteet (2005: 160) argues that religious claims in the Israeli narrative are needed "to craft the appearance of an intimate and deep connection between past time and place and the present". Palestinians as the original inhabitants at the outbreak of the conflict, however, are less in need to craft this relationship to land by religious legitimacy.

Besides the predictive power of rather neutral conflict labels (such as *political conflict*), we observe how conflict labels which define an aggressor (such as *Palestinian terrorism* or *Israeli aggression*) predicts the delegitimization of this actor. In general, by defining an adversary as aggressor or terrorist, its motives are implied to be unreasonable and immoral, and its erosion of rights may be justified *per se* (Peteet, 2005). Such justification strategies are embedded in processes of motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990). A clear picture of an aggressor was most visible in the hawkish-religious pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian views in their strongest labelling of terrorism and aggression while denying the adversary's self-defense. Simultaneously, between these two groups, we observed most delegitimization, mainly by the exclusive condemnation of the other side's violence.

5.3 Structured representations and hybrid views

The particularly high loadings of participants on certain perspectives might indicate very structured or retracted patterns of thought. Individuals' high loadings reflect an almost identical sorting with the average response pattern (up to .88 for the pro-Palestinian view). As frames are often constructed, reassured, and hardened in social contact, high loadings may reflect the like-minded context within solidarity organizations (Coleman, 2004). We, however, cannot infer whether the organizational environment causes this congruence, or whether the common membership is a consequence of already existing similar beliefs (Dryzek et al., 1989). An alternative explanation of high loadings could refer to simple, inclusive Q set statements, which may have caused highly similar responses because of obvious rather than shared perspectives (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

Our results, however, show not only exclusively rigid boundaries between distinct perspectives. The presence of confounding participants (loading highly on more than one component) also suggests that some individuals may hold a combination of conflict representations. We observed such a 'pair' of so-called hybrid views (Webler et al., 2009) between the dovish pro-Israeli and the conciliatory view, which included also a rabbi and a pastor. Not being prevailed in their belief systems may facilitate their openness for compromise.

5.4 Relationships to previous research on mental models

Our study lends partial support to the findings of Kempf (2011) on mental models of the Israel-Palestine conflict in conflict outsiders. The conciliatory view best reflects Kempf's neutral frame (with a slight Israel-critical touch). The pro-Palestinian view corresponds most closely to the postulated pro-Palestinian peace frame (including criticism and accentuation of needs and condemnation of violence of both parties). Kempf's pro-Israeli war-frame (uncritical justification of violence, delegitimization, and a win-lose attitude) corresponds most closely to the hawkish-religious pro-Israeli view (one element of a war frame was reflected in the pro-Palestinian perspective by its exclusive condemnation of Israeli violence). The discovery of the dovish pro-Israeli view, however, has no equivalent in Kempf's results (it, however, contains parts of a peace frame).

Differences between our and Kempf's findings (2011) also emerged in terms of the salience of beliefs. In Kempf's study, a negotiated settlement and belief in peace were invariably a central element in all frames, even war frames. In our study, in contrast, negotiation was rather irrelevant in the hawkish-religious pro-Israeli view. Further, a belief in a just and lasting peace was only central in the dovish pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian perspectives. This might indicate that belief in peace may be less important in unconcerned groups (conciliatory view) and war frame groups (hawkish-religious pro-Israeli view). These disparate findings may be attributed to the Q sorting task acting against socially desirable responding (such as a belief in peace) because it forced participants to set priorities, whereas Kempf's rating scale format did not.

Further differences were also observable in the evaluation of parties' (violent) actions. In Kempf's (2011) Austrian/German sample, Palestinian violence was condemned consistently more severely than Israeli military actions. Our sample, in contrast, shows a more differentiated picture, as both parties are criticized for their actions. Such disparate findings might be attributed either to our more detailed study material, our institutionally neutral context, or the different samples (German and Austrian students vs. pre-selected stakeholders and neutral participants).

5.5   Relationships to previous research on societal beliefs

From the resulting representations, parallels to Bar-Tal's (2011) ethos of conflict in the Israeli and Palestinian societies may be drawn. Most importantly, our most opposing perspectives, the hawkish-religious pro-Israeli and the pro-Palestinian view, reflect a spillover of so-called 'mirrored beliefs'. 'Mirrored beliefs' represent central conflict beliefs of the actual adversaries which are mirrored in the respective conflict positions (such as exclusive victimization, a positive self-image or delegitimization as central beliefs for both adversaries; Oren et al., 2004). These beliefs represent the core values of the "two memories" of the conflict (Said, 2002: 248). We discovered a spillover of these antagonistic beliefs to opposing conflict outsiders. Though the hawkish-religious and the pro-Palestinian view are highly antagonistic, they also share a few beliefs. For example, both seem to demand the same solution: one state (we assume the specific nature of this state, though, to differ fundamentally: from being ethno-religious Jewish to secular democratic). Due to these few shared beliefs, both representations are distinguished as separate components rather than two bipolar, opposing poles of the same component, entirely mirroring each other.

Accordingly, we consider the hawkish-religious pro-Israeli view prototypical for the ethos of conflict, though not the dovish pro-Israeli view. The latter does not share all typical beliefs of the conflict ethos. For example, its recognition of mutual victimization instead of exclusive Israeli victimization indicate a consciousness of the undisputedly asymmetric power relationship in light of Israel's military superiority and a significantly greater number of casualties in the Palestinian society (see, e.g., B'tselem, 2013). Despite such a perceptive gap within the pro-Israeli camp, both perspectives adopted a "siege mentality": a strong belief in an existential threat for Israel and its need for security (Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1992). The pro-Israeli camp is, however, fragmented in how this threat should be counteracted. The hawkish view opposes a two-state solution due to potential attacks from outside. The dovish view, in contrast, opposes a one-state solution on the basis of internal threats by demographic issues. This fragmentation in the radical and the moderate pro-Israeli camp reflects the current orthodox and secular split in the Israeli society itself.

To conclude, we systematically discovered a partial spillover of societal beliefs being found in the Israeli-Palestinian societies to conflict outsiders. Incongruence of ethos of conflict and our conflict representations might be attributed to processes of subjective identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Accordingly, contextually dependent beliefs may fulfill different individual and collective functions, such as groups' needs for creating a sense of superiority, coping with stress, or the justification of violence (Bar-Tal et al., 2010). For example, our findings suggest that a belief in peace may be more motivating, and thus consistently salient, in the conflict context than among conflict outsiders. Another alternative explanation for incongruence in beliefs may be found in cognitive heuristics. When individuals attempt to evaluate particular conflicts, they regularly draw analogies such as comparisons or metaphors to more familiar conflicts (Gentner, 2003). Thus, the Israel-Palestine conflict may likely be filtered through another set of beliefs based on a conflict which is contextually more salient.

5.6   Socio-psychological correlates

Due to the small sample and purposive sampling strategy, our explorative correlational findings cannot be generalized. Yet, based on our study, we draw the tentative conclusion that emotional and socio-demographic characteristics may be related to particular conflict representations. First, from the overview of our representations and its correlates, it is evident that these links follow the same line as Kempf's (2011) findings. Kempf suggested that with stronger involvement in the conflict (empathy, personal and physical contact to the conflict area), representations seem to evolve from being implicit, unemotional, and unpartisan (possibly corresponding to the conciliatory view) to being explicit, concrete, and partisan (the remaining views). Further, personal contact beyond Israelis to Palestinians seemed to benefit a pro-Palestinian position. In terms of political orientation, a right-wing stance was rather dominating in the pro-Israeli positions and a left-wing attitude

in the pro-Palestinian position. In terms of religious affiliation, interestingly, a Jewish affiliation was mainly found in the dovish pro-Israeli view. The hawkish view, advocating Jewish-Israeli claims most radically, in contrast, was held exclusively by committed Christians. We suggest that this apparent incongruence of belief systems and representatives might be explained by the hawkish group's closeness to Christian Zionism, an exclusively religious ideology supporting the most radical positions in Jewish Zionism.

In a cautious attempt, we may determine which conflict representation might be most prevalent in the Swiss population. We hypothesize a widespread occurrence of all but the hawkish-religious pro-Israeli view, with the conciliatory view held most likely. The widespread critical evaluation of Israel's conflict policies in Switzerland (Longchamp et al., 2007) is best reflected in the pro-Palestinian and the conciliatory view. Looking at our representations' social backgrounds, the dovish pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian views cut across social categories, which is an indicator for higher societal prevalence (the hawkish view is limited to Israel-supporting organizations and church communities). Overall, however, the lack of affiliation to solidarity groups and its most moderate conflict engagement suggests the conciliatory representation to be most widespread in the Swiss population.

5.7   Limitations and suggestions for future research

Our study's explanatory power is limited in several ways. Our aim was to qualitatively explore the diversity and structures of conflict representations in conflict outsiders, not its generalization to the Swiss population at large. Thus, any statements about the representations' prevalence in social groups are to be taken with caution.

Additionally, limitations in terms of the study material might have led to an absence of potentially existing representations. As the Q set statements were not directly taken from the discourse of the actual population studied, the discovered representations may not uncover the entirety of conflict positions in the Swiss context. Whether the diversity might be even larger could be investigated by an even more diverse social, political, and religious sample. Furthermore, the statements' inclusive framing may have not given credit to the differentiated conflict expertise of some participants. This problem was counteracted by the possibility of open comments to the statements. Overall, however, we argue that the simple essence of beliefs and their comparability is adequate for the study's aim of an initial exploration of conflict representations.

We suggest future research in this area focuses on aspects such as dynamic conflict representations, as well as motivation and emotions behind representations. To account for dynamic changes in conflict constructions beyond the momentary opinions, repeated Q studies are suitable (Watts & Stenner, 2005). More knowledge on long-term motivations accompanying conflict representations may be achieved by separate assessments of anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, human rights, or belligerent attitudes (Kempf, 2011). Relatedly, not only deliberate reasoning, but also affect plays a central role in moral judgments (Greene & Haidt, 2002). Future research might thus use a combined approach to more systematically explore the emotional diversity towards the conflict in conflict outsiders (for the Israeli society, see Halperin & Gross, 2011).

5.8   Implications for conflict resolution

Despite the postulated limitations, our findings have a number of implications for conflict resolution. From a methodological point of view, this study has provided a roadmap of a novel way of examining beliefs of conflict outsiders in non-conflict contexts. The landscape of conflict representations in a non-conflict context may indirectly affect the course of the respective conflict itself. With the growing connectedness of the globalized world, international legitimization is of ever-increasing importance to conflict parties. Conflict representations of conflict outsiders may point to material or psychological support which actual conflict parties of similar belief systems as found in non-conflict contexts may expect from these outsiders.

Further, by systematically defining and clarifying conflict perspectives, our study serves as starting point for the reduction of misconceptions in conflict debates and the formation of consensus groups in conflict outsiders (Durning, 2005; Webler et al., 2009). After defining relevant stakeholders, concepts of deliberative dialogue or public deliberation may provide forums for the exchange of conflict representations, the weighting against each other, and discussion of common concerns and opposition (Mathews, 1998). Similarly, in intergroup dialogue, clashing groups may express negative emotions about injustice in a mediated space, where common grounds and shared meanings are developed (Chasin et al., 1996).

Finally, the documentation of circulating perspectives, their central concerns and prevalence, might be illuminating for authorities in order to be appealing to voting groups or the (Swiss) population at large (Durning, 2005). This might be crucial as the Israel-Palestine conflict is a recurrent issue on the political landscape and often considered a problem of global scale.

6.   Conclusion

In a world of ever-increasing interconnectedness, parties in violent conflicts are increasingly challenged to seek global legitimacy. This strengthens the role of conflict outsiders as determining forces in the course of conflicts. Despite the relevance of conflict outsiders, there is very little research into the systematic exploration of their respective conflict viewpoints and structures. With an approach informed by Q methodology, this study provided a roadmap of a novel and appropriate way of bringing insights into beliefs of conflict outsiders in non-conflict contexts. It contributes to the literature by empirically uncovering four socially shared viewpoints of the Israel-Palestine conflict among Swiss residents of differing levels of conflict engagement. These representations demonstrate an internal logic in term of belief system, as they constitute systematic wholes across central conflict domains. Building on previous research, our results lend partial support to mental models of conflict in conflict outsiders (Kempf 2011) and show a spillover of conflict ethos from conflict parties to conflict outsiders, as manifested in our most opposing pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian representations. We see this study as a contribution to facilitate clarification, exchange, and disruption of hardened narratives for its re-construction and joint action towards a peaceful solution.

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Appendix: Complete list of statements and z-scores for each conflict representation

Themes		Statements	C1	C2	C3	C4
		Conflict label				
Nature of conflict	1	Political conflict	0.56	1.40	1.42	0.72
	2	Religious conflict	1.79	**-0.14**	2.07	**-1.30**
	3	Imperialist conflict	-0.93	-0.34	0.06	0.43
	4	Ethnic conflict	0.33	-0.11	**1.26**	-0.87
	5	Identity conflict	-0.52	0.71	0.22	-0.27
	6	Existential conflict	1.52	**2.30**	**0.23**	**-0.31**
	7	Colonial conflict	-0.75	-0.27	**0.61**	1.25
	8	Proxy conflict	**1.05**	-0.36	-0.35	-0.77
	9	Class conflict	-0.53	0.21	-1.05	-0.19
Conflict expansion	10	Regional conflict***	0.71	-0.01	0.49	-0.14
	11	Global conflict	**1.56**	-0.56	**0.44**	-0.10
Conflict components	12	Apartheid	-0.70	-0.96	-0.55	**1.71**
	13	Clash of civilizations	-0.41	-0.27	**0.42**	**-1.09**
	14	Occupation	**-1.40**	0.57	0.63	**1.52**
	15	Ethnic cleansing	**-0.44**	-2.18	-1.96	**1.47**
	16	Genocide	-0.80	**-2.33**	**-1.52**	-0.46
Ascription of agency	17	Palestinian terrorism	1.03	0.81	-1.04	**-1.30**
	18	Israeli state terrorism	**-1.96**	-0.97	-1.02	**0.88**
	19	Palestinian self-defence struggle	**-0.70**	0.73	0.68	0.94
	20	Israeli self-defence	1.74	1.96	**0.21**	-1.38
	21	Palestinian aggression	0.71	0.21	**-0.83**	**-1.75**
	22	Israeli aggression	**-1.78**	-0.61	-0.75	**0.99**
		Issues and dynamics				
Goals and motives	23	Palestinians seek justice	**-0.88**	0.46	0.59	**1.12**
	24	Palestinian's goal is peace between two people	**-1.48**	0.01	-0.04	0.15
	25	Palestinians seek recognition and respect	-0.06	0.48	1.52	1.26
	26	Israel's goal is peace between two people	0.65	0.68	-0.15	-0.50
	27	Israel seeks recognition and respect	0.26	0.97	1.28	-0.15
	28	Israel seeks power	-0.38	-0.10	0.56	0.79
	29	Israel seeks security	1.45	2.05	1.31	**-0.17**
Justification of violence	30	Israel's violent acts against Palestinian terrorism are justified	0.19	0.69	-0.85	-0.79
	31	Israels military operations against the Palestinians are exorbitant	-0.70	-0.45	**1.51**	**0.61**
	32	Palestinian terrorist acts are justified	-1.36	-0.61	-0.78	**0.93**
	33	Palestinians' war of liberation is legitimate	**-0.77**	0.43	0.75	**1.87**
	34	Most Palestinians support suicide bombers	0.51	-0.79	-0.33	-0.02
	35	The assertion by force over religious claims only perpetuates the conflict	0.00	**0.66**	**1.67**	0.12
Territorial issues	36	The Land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river belongs exclusively to the Palestinians	-2.10	-1.49	-1.63	**-0.46**
	37	The Land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river belongs exclusively to the Jews	**1.25**	**-1.02**	-1.54	-1.79

Nature of the state of Israel & zionism	38	Jews opposed to the Occupation are anti-Israel and self-hating	**0.31**	**-0.46**	-1.57	-1.11
	39	Most criticism of Israel is anti-semitically motivated	**1.25**	-0.54	-0.48	**-1.20**
	40	Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East	1.17	1.41	**0.35**	**-0.71**
	41	Zionism is a form of racism	-1.58	-0.86	-1.22	**1.19**
	42	A Jewish state cannot be democratic	-0.73	-0.86	-0.79	**1.02**
Self-determination	43	Jewish people in Israel have a right to self-determination	1.14	1.41	0.89	**0.23**
	44	Palestinians have a right to self-determination	**-0.43**	**1.35**	**0.55**	**2.02**
Victimization	45	Israelis are the primary victims in the conflict	**1.24**	-0.50	-0.25	**-1.03**
	46	Palestinians are the primary victims in the conflict	-0.45	-0.61	0.12	**1.18**
The wall/barrier & Jewish settlements	47	Israeli Wall / Security Fence is justified	0.30	0.54	**-0.72**	**-1.38**
	48	Jewish settlements in the West Bank are justified	**0.67**	-0.91	-0.80	-1.38
Reference to Holocaust	49	Jews are doing the same with the Palestinians what was done to themselves in the Holocaust	-1.82	-2.22	-0.66	-0.31
	50	Muslims want a Holocaust	**1.45**	-1.05	-1.31	**-1.99**
	51	A second Holocaust has to be prevented at all costs	0.98	1.44	1.27	0.50
		Solution process				
Belief in peace	52	A just and lasting peace between Israelis and the Palestinians is possible	0.06	1.44	0.12	1.22
Emphasis on parties' needs	53	First priority have the Palestinians for living a peaceful life	-0.30	-0.32	-0.68	**0.53**
	54	First priority have the Israelis for living a peaceful future	0.70	0.22	**-0.75**	-0.06
	55	A solution must take into account the necessities of both populations	0.73	0.63	**1.89**	0.78
Violent, zero-Sum attitude	56	Annexation of the West Bank and Gaza into a Jewish state	**0.62**	-1.07	-0.84	-1.34
	57	Israel shall fight Palestinian terrorism with full force	0.44	-0.08	-1.15	-1.07
	58	There is no middle ground solution: at the end, only the Israeli or the Palestinian people will remain	-1.28	**-2.01**	-1.36	-0.69
Non-violent, win-win attitude	59	A just solution to the conflict should be found through negotiation	0.05	1.27	1.11	0.44
	60	Recognition of mutual identity and rights***	0.51	1.19	1.34	0.91
	61	Perception of the other side not as a collective enemy but as single individuals***	0.22	0.84	0.76	0.17
	62	Building up empathy***	0.20	0.33	0.75	0.34
	63	Stopping spiral of violence	-0.19	-0.09	**1.67**	0.16
	64	Reducing glorification of violence	-0.13	0.73	0.96	0.15
	65	Reducing prejudices	0.38	0.70	0.95	-0.07
	66	The current state of the conflict should be maintained	-0.43	-0.91	-1.35	-0.73
Jerusalem	67	Jerusalem should belong to the Palestinians	**-1.71**	-0.72	-0.50	-0.36
	68	Jerusalem should belong to the Jews	**1.61**	-0.55	-0.54	**-1.39**
	69	Jerusalem should be divided between Jews and Palestinians	**-1.11**	0.37	0.58	0.50
Palestinian refugees	70	The refugees should be given the right to return	-0.63	-0.45	**0.51**	1.46
	71	The Palestinians should go to live in the surrounding Arab states	**0.01**	-1.27	-1.38	**-1.90**
Territorial issues	72	A two-state solution (Israel and Palestine)	**-1.29**	1.27	0.93	0.53
	73	A one-state solution	**0.62**	-0.95	-0.83	**1.39**
	74	Jews deserve a Jewish state	**1.36**	0.29	0.13	**-0.75**

| **Foreign intervention** | 75 | US support is necessary in the solution process | 0.42 | -0.06 | **-0.91** | -0.14 |
| | 76 | Foreign powers should intervene | -1.05 | -0.71 | -0.31 | -0.07 |

Notes. Numbers in bold refer to distinguishing statements for the respective component (significant at $p < .05$). *** indicates consensus statements across all components (non-significant at $p > .01$). C1 = Hawkish-religious pro-Israeli view; C2 = Dovish Pro-Israeli view; C3 = Conciliatory view; C4 = Pro-Palestinian view.

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