

## *Original Paper*

# The Prisoner's Dilemma as a Conceptual Framework for Understanding Value-Related and Behavioral Changes in Western Societies in the Second Decade of the 21st Century: The Case of Israel

Leehu Zysberg<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Graduate School, Gordon College of Education, Haifa, Israel

\* Leehu Zysberg, The Graduate School, Gordon College of Education, Haifa, Israel

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### ***Abstract***

*In the popular media and from time to time in the social science literature, voices are heard describing a process of social disintegration and the deterioration of common values in western societies. What may account for this fragmentation? This article uses the theoretical framework of the prisoner's dilemma to conceptualize the phenomenon, analyze its causes and processes, and to try and outline directions for dealing with it, using processes and data regarding the Israeli society in recent years.*

### ***Keywords***

*values education, culture, Israeli society, social psychology, prisoner's dilemma, social disintegration*

## **1. Introduction**

The last decade is characterized by accelerating social division, polarization in political and social attitudes and value and ethical disintegration throughout most of the western world, with the USA and the EU at the center (Inglehart & Norris, 2017; Muddle, 2016). Israel follows suit, with similar processes of social disintegration and polarization (Carmon, Stern, & Karmnitzer, 2011; Shahar, 2017): Numerous social indicators suggest that values and personal as well as social conduct norms are gradually eroding. The practical implications of this ongoing process are potentially devastating and are often recognized by historians as ones that might lead to the collapse of societies, states, and empires throughout history (MacMullen, 1988). The literature on the subject is surprisingly meager. Evidence of the trends generally delineated above can be found mainly in the popular press and socio-political

discourse (for example, Feldman, 2018) rather than in academic or educational forums (Aloni, 1988). At the same time, data available to the general public is showing troubling trends. While focusing on the Israeli society as a case study, I suggest that similar processes are taking place in numerous societies throughout the so-called western world. I will hereby present evidence to support the general claims made above, and then lay out a theoretical model aimed at accounting for these phenomena and proposing an underlying mechanism that may also point to how these trends may be mitigated.

### *1.1 So, What's Wrong? Indicators of Social Decline*

As suggested above, various social indicators, paint a grim picture of a generally robust society at the brink of disintegration. Herein I will focus on a few such indicators:

*Governmental Corruption:* The Governmental Corruption Index compares public perceptions, reviews legal systems and rules, and examines constitutional and practical outcomes of the extent to which corruption in the conduct of political and state bodies. It is considered an accepted international measure of the moral and values of the global coalition against corruption. According to annual reports of this index, Israel ranked 14th (the 1st place indicates a high level of morality and governmental values), one year after the establishment of the index system (1996), while in 2018 it ranked 34<sup>th</sup>. As additional examples I will mention the USA which ranked 15 in 1996 and ranks 23 in 2019 and Poland that slipped from the 24<sup>th</sup> place to 41<sup>st</sup> in 2019 (The global coalition against corruption, 2018).

At the same time, popular media is flooded with reports of corruption at all levels of the Israeli political and social establishment: from a president accused of sexual assault, to corruption by the legal Bar, and currently two prime ministers found involved in various corruption cases (for example: Gurley, 2019). Even if this impression is inaccurate, it seems that wherever you look, improper and questionable conduct is evident.

*Violence as a phenomenon and social norm:* For many years Israel boasted high levels of personal safety and security despite its ongoing military conflicts with its neighbors: Citizens reported high levels of personal security and safety in their neighborhoods, or towns, and indicators of civilian violence (e.g.: violence in schools, crimes resulting in death, etc.) were low. In recent years, however, social indicators reflect a slow but ongoing process in which Israeli society not only experiences a rise in the occurrence of violence among its ranks, but that violence becomes a norm or an acceptable and predictable course of action. For example, severe violence cases against various service providers have become a common sight (Ministry of Health, 2017): In 2017, more than 3500 cases of violence directed against public health workers occurred in the health system alone. Although it is a global phenomenon, Israel is showing it steeper than other countries on this issue.

At the same time, verbal and physical violence is becoming a common social currency. Thus, for example, violent discourse on social networks, and in the public media (Yifat, 2012; Berl Katzenelson Foundation, 2019): Social indicators show that over one third of the volume of discourse on various social networks in Israel is of a violent nature. Most types of verbal violence converge on: racial discourse, condemnation and defamation on a personal basis and threats of harm and violence. A

research report revealed that verbal violence is directed primarily at Arabs (50% of the discourse) and then refugees (43%), leftists (43%), west-bank settlers (32%) and ultra-Orthodox (19%). In addition, about 18% of the online discourse around academia and 9% of the online discourse regarding the Supreme Court contained violent content. In other words—few are the social groups in Israel at whom no particularly violent discourse is directed. In the EU, for comparison, hate speech is a growing worry and legislation is often used to mitigate it (European court for human rights, 2019). Despite the actions taken, evidence suggest growth in its prevalence.

The violent and divisive discourse culture often translates into and violent conduct, from outbreaks of violent protest (for example: the Ethiopian immigrant protest in the summer of 2019, see: Bar Lev, 2019), to an increase in the level and frequency of domestic violence, and more recently—a trend that has been taboo in Israeli society—violence against toddlers. The Ministry of Public Security estimates that hundreds of such cases occur each year, with 100 or more cases opening, but very few of them end in actual prosecution and conviction (Shelmore, 2019).

*Law Abuse in Everyday Life:* Perhaps as a result of the two trends mentioned above, we are witnessing unprecedented levels of public abuse of the law, and not only in Israel: The US government is coping with amassing evidence of numerous cases of governmental misconduct (see for example: Johnson and Phillips, 2019). At the same time a growing number of EU member countries are dealing with rising figures describing higher levels of government corruption and lawlessness (Bokowski & Voronova, 2017).

Daily law violations have long become part of our daily routine. The most common and visible example of daily life is traffic offenses—from allegedly minor offenses (who did not get a traffic jam in the city due to double and triple parking near shopping centers, schools and more?), to fatal road accidents, most of which are associated with “human error” (laundered phrase for ignoring the precautionary laws). For example, the latest OECD report on Israel places it in the lowest (worst) third rank for road accident incidents (Ziger, 2018). These statistics are even more worrying when we see that throughout the EU and in the US a trend of reduction in traffic fatalities (ETSC, 2018).

These factors have a direct effect on quality of life and national morale. While Israel has consistently ranked high in the World Happiness Index for years, there are some indicators that show there’s cause for worry. For example, despite not receiving media coverage or serious attention from government and other bodies, the phenomenon of “brain drain” (loss of high quality workers and human capital) has been in renewed momentum in recent years: estimates report that about 11% of individuals who gained their PhDs in Israel actually live overseas, and an increase in the rate of those with a college education in the field of computers and technology leaving the country (Datel, 2018). Another interesting indicator is the proportion of Israelis applying for a foreign passport in addition to their Israeli one. This practice has become very popular in recent years and it is estimated that over 15,000 Israelis open procedures for gaining additional citizenship each year (see for example an article on Portuguese Citizenship: Foreign, 2019). This trend may reflect concern for the future of society and the state, a

“backup plan”, if you will and even a status symbol (which may indicate the diminishing prestige or pride of Israeli identity? See for example Harpaz, 2012).

These worrying indicators reflect severe deterioration in the fabric of any society. In the case of Israel, and in the face of alarming social developments such as increasing polarization between factions in Israeli society (which have been successfully discussed elsewhere, see, for example: Peres and Ben Rafael, 2010), this article asks: How have we become one of the worst versions of ourselves and why? And as an answer, a classic model, borrowed from the field of psychology, suggests and presents the core concepts of trust and mutual respect and the resulting—collaboration, as keys to our understanding of the above trends. This model is referred to as the “prisoner’s dilemma” and may not only help us understand how things happened and why, but may also indicate directions in which to work to improve the situation.

## 2. The Prisoner’s Dilemma: A Psycho-Economic Model of Collaboration

The prisoner’s dilemma is a relatively simple model presented by the Rand Institute experts in the early 1950s, as a tool for construing social decision-making based on an economic cost-benefit model at its core (see Axelrod’s 1980 explanation and examples). The framework is both simple and sophisticated: Imagine two criminals caught for committing a crime together. Investigators make each of them a proposition as follows—If any of you confesses the first, he will come out without penalty and only the partner will be severely punished. If you both admit to the crime—you will be both moderately punished. If you both refuse to admit—we will have no choice but to let you go.

In other words—the two will benefit the most if they rely on each other. However, the implication is—postponing immediate personal gain and taking the potential risk that the other party will admit first. The model represents a test of trust and ability to collaborate to promote a common interest in the face of the possibility of betrayal of trust in favor of quick personal gain at the expense of others (from all parties concerned).

**Table 1. A graphic Summary of the Prisoner’s Dilemma**

| Person A/Person B | Admit first                             | Never admit                             |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Admit First       | Moderate punishment for both            | Person A goes free<br>Person B punished |
| Never admit       | Person B goes free<br>Person A punished | No punishment for both                  |

The model has become very popular and helped better understand economic decision-making (e.g., decisions of capital market investors in times of uncertainty; see, for example: Stout, 2002), behavior and decision-making (Rehmeyer, 2012), and international politics (Conybeare, 1984), among others.

Anecdotal attempts have been made to use this model to understand socio-cultural behavior, which will serve as the basis for the analysis below, in which I will attempt to use this model to account for the processes described above in Israeli society as an example for numerous other western societies.

### 3. The Prisoner's Dilemma as a Model Explaining Social Conduct Values

If there is one element in the prisoner's dilemma about which there is adequate agreement in the social and interpersonal context, it is the element of cooperation as a component of culture. Culture can be referred to as a frame of reference that defines and dictates values, norms and rules of behavior. Culture, then, may set social norms regarding the importance of trust and collaboration between people in a given group (Wong & Hong, 2005). In other words—the way people function in the prisoner's dilemma can be treated not only as a reflection of their personal and specific preferences but beyond the individual case—as a reflection of values and norms that shape their behavior as a kind of “social compass” (Glance & Huberman, 1994). Since the 1970s, studies linking people's functioning within the prisoner's dilemma methodology and basic components of human interpersonal behavior in a given society can be identified (Daws et al., 1977). Simply put, the extent to which people are willing to trust others and collaborate for a common cause can describe and explain behavior patterns of large social groups and even cultures.

Since we are dealing with a given society and culture that sets parameters for interpersonal behavior, I will use Hofstede's model for cultural dimension diagnosis (Hofstede, 1993) to try and account for the phenomena at hand:

*Power distance:* A dimension that describes the degree of equality in a given culture and the extent to which hierarchy exists and is supported in a given society.

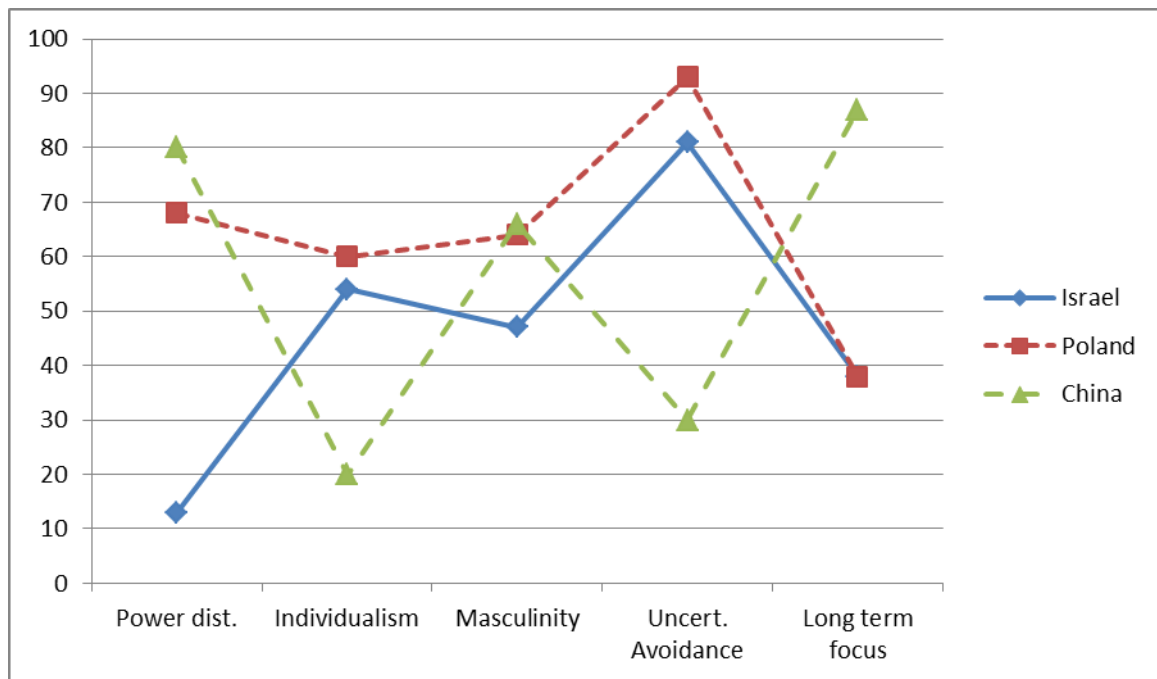
*Individualism-collectivism:* A dimension that describes the value of the individual against the collective in the given society and culture. What is the emphasis on? the common good? or satisfying the needs of the individual?

*Femininity-Masculinity:* To what extent are values and behaviors considered traditional “masculine” (e.g., competitive, aggressive, direct and goal-oriented) or “feminine” (for example: open interpersonal communication, caring and nurturing, expressing emotions, etc.).

*Uncertainty avoidance:* The extent to which a given society emphasizes rules and norms, regulations, or embraces uncertainty and doubt.

*Time Orientation:* Describes the extent to which there is an emphasis on long-term thinking and planning or focus on the “here and now”.

While we see cultural variations across nations and countries, most western societies can be broadly described as relatively moderate on power distances, with higher emphasis on individualism (compared with collectivism), and focus on the present rather than the past or future (Hofstede Insights International Project Website, 2019). Here, for example are the results for Israel, interlaced with the results for Poland and, as a non-Western control country, the data for China.



**Figure 2. Comparing Hofstede's Cultural Model Indices for Israel, Poland and China (Adapted from Hofstede Insights International Project Website, 2019). The Numerical Data Are Percentages Relative to the Other Comparison Countries**

According to this profile, Israeli society seems to be characterized by very low power distance (everyone feels involved and relate to others as peers), above-average tendency toward individualism, a relatively low future orientation (i.e.: greater focus on the here and now) and a strong tendency to avoid uncertainty. With the exception of power distances, these patterns are quite similar to the Polish cultural patterns, and show marked differences (almost opposite) compared with the Chinese culture.

Can we see the possible associations between the cultural characteristics and the parameters that define the prisoner's dilemma model? Well, at least for 2 of the above-mentioned cultural aspects, one can see an interesting link: The first is the strong tendency to avoid uncertainty: Decision-making studies suggest that uncertainty avoidance may lead to "early closure" of analytical and reasoning processes in problem solving settings (Kruglanski et al., 2006). Uncertainty avoidance might lead the individual to choose the first solution that is reasonable for him (thus reducing the tendency to cooperate - which requires trusting another and living in a state of uncertainty throughout the process). Also, the short-term focus, on "here and now", may undermine the choice to collaborate with others for a common goal. The choice of collaboration requires coordination but also a tendency and motivation to think ahead in terms of "scripts" (what if?) and compare them in terms of possible outcomes in the long run. In the absence of values and norms encouraging collaboration, the tendency to choose to cooperate in a conflict of interest situation decreases significantly.

At the same time, there are also characteristics of Israeli culture that emerge from the picture that may encourage cooperation: whether it is the limited distances of power and the relatively balanced perception between individualism and collectivism. These two aspects may seem to encourage mutual goodwill, and a willingness to trust one another to promote a common interest. What, then, might be at the cause of the above described social downward spiral?

#### **4. Factors of Value Change in Israeli Society Vis-à-Vis the Prisoner's Dilemma**

Over the past decade, western societies (Israel included) are facing challenges posed by increasing diversity, cultural, ethnic and religious differentiation between various factions in society. A sweeping process of widening gaps that are becoming more prominent and touch not only standards of living and life-styles but also the most fundamental beliefs and values. These gaps make Israel a “tribal” state (Rubinstein, 2017): This characteristic reflects a reality in which social gaps are so engrained that sub-groups of the same general population find it hard to agree on even the most basic values and norms. We see it happening in the UK around the “Brexit” movement that actually reflects a much deeper divide; we see it in the polarization in the American society, as well as for example Israeli society's inability to vote and nominate a coherent majority-based government throughout 2019.

This crawling but steady social disintegration process may provide at least a partial explanation for the loss of trust and willingness to cooperate in this cultural encounter that is often the basis for conflict over opposing values. One of the most painful recent examples demonstrating this disparity was the public reaction to the trial of Elor Azaria, an Israeli soldier who shot a Palestinian Hebron resident who, along with a partner, attempted a stabbing attack in 2016. After the perpetrator was already neutralized and laying severely wounded on the ground, Azaria arrived at the scene and shot the wounded perpetrator. It is interesting to note that at the legal level, Azaria was found guilty of ethical misconduct, and of a serious violation of the rules of engagement. Although the soldier's conduct was treated by the IDF authorities according to the international law, parts of the public expressed great empathy for him and his family, justifying his conduct and even describing it as an act of heroism (Aligon-Der, 2018). This conflict can be understood as an uneasy meeting of two contradictory sets of values: one reflects a set of norms of ethics based on the value of human life of every person (even if he or she is an enemy or a terrorist), according to which shooting for injury and killing must be justified only for the purpose of preventing a clear and immediate life risk. The second point of view reflects an “eye-for-an-eye” approach and considers the perpetrator as one who does not “deserves” to live after attempting a lethal terror attack. In addition, the value of supporting the nation's soldiers as symbols of national security and the nation's future may play a role here. The conflict was so severe that threats were made against the prosecutors, and against the senior commanding officers of the IDF. Quite a few authors see this affair and the public conduct around the event, as a breaking point in the fabric of Israeli society (Leibowitz-Der, 2016).

What processes might promote the trends listed above? A limited number of selected possible processes will be reviewed herein with the understanding that it is impossible to cover all the relevant factors.

#### *4.1 Natural Dynamics of Multicultural Society Development—Melting pot vs. Back to Roots Societies*

The Sociological literature has dealt with the dynamics of the development of multicultural societies. This line of investigation started in the US looking at its nature as an immigrant-absorbing state and in recent decades in Israel that has absorbed generations of immigrants from different generations and cultures. Such trends are now becoming also evident in EU countries, which have shown a rising interest in understanding the dynamics of cross and multi-culturalism (Alexander, 2013).

Interestingly, writers agree on a typical multi-generational dynamic of multi-cultural integration and dis-integration dynamics: first, the “melting pot” model dominates, and in other words there is the expectation of relinquishing the original immigrant identity to embrace and adopt a new identity that aligns with the new world of values, as part of the effort to establish something new (for example—the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in the State of Israel, see an example of this literature in: Gelber, 2008). This dynamic, however, is apparently doomed to failure as it forces entire generations to repress values, identities and centuries-old traditions from which they have come and grew in favor of a culture that they do not necessarily identify with or even know in depth. As a result, second and third generations find themselves shifting “back to roots” and re-identifying with their original culture. We have seen this happening years ago in the US with the black population redefining itself as “African American” as a nod to their cultural background (see for example: McDonald, 2006), and more recently with immigrant populations in the EU, as well as in Israel (Peters, 2017).

Here is the real challenge—to what extent do immigrants from the Ukraine or Iraq adopt a new culture and identity, their source culture, or a combination of both (and if so—what is this combination? Which elements are adopted from each culture and which are rejected?). The theoretical and research literature in the field is quite rich and it mainly illuminates the difficulty of integrating identities that sometimes carry contradictory values and beliefs (Lisk, 1995). Social-psychological studies have shown that in encounters between different cultural groups, there is a tendency for emphasis on inter-group differences rather than similarities which often leads to the rise of conflict between groups (see, for example: Brewer, 1999).

Assuming these dynamics take place in Israeli society, as well as many other societies (and there is sufficient evidence to suppose this), they may account for the phenomenon of social differentiation by sectors, “tribes”, if you will.

#### *4.2 National Development Dynamics—Erosion of Shared Values*

The beginning of every social group and certainly every nation is based on a very high sense of unity—pioneers lay the ideological and practical foundations upon which a country is built, often in the face of opposition, hardships and challenges. It is enough to think of the founding fathers of the United States (Pasquino, 1998), as well as of other (democratic) nations, to understand that these early groups

were characterized by unified ideology, that motivated a group to fight and strive to achieve their common goals and self-definition as a nation. A similar process is evident around the establishment of the state of Israel (Don-Yahya & Zisar, 1999): Despite disagreements between various Zionist thinkers, fighters, and political leaders, at least at the overall level, a uniform ideological line was dominant throughout the years in which the young state was established. A sense of “togetherness” was prevalent, imparting a sense of common mission and shared goals (Knapelman et al., 2008).

However, as an integral part of the process of state and national development, this sense of mission slowly wears out once its goals are achieved. If Israelis were motivated at the outset of the state by a shared vision of a Jewish state in Israel on the one hand and the choice of a place under the sun at the end of the Second World War and the Holocaust, on the other hand, then these goals have become a viable reality. The question arises—what’s next? But naturally, once the basic goals that constitute the common denominator of the people have been achieved, a process begins in which numerous different goals, values and visions of the future of the state are presented, often derived from the increasing diversity described in the previous section—Multiculturalism, Multiple Value Systems and Traditions (Bartle, 2001; Fisher, 2018). Thus, as shared values grow old, the variance between groups and sub-groups within the same nation is emphasized.

A pivotal example of this is the conflict in Israeli society around the concept of a Jewish and democratic state. A large portion of the state’s population supports a liberal democratic identity for the state as a modern Western entity that embraces core values of equality, unity before the law, and civil rights enshrined in a democratic political system. Other sections of the population do not share this vision and call for the implementation of other models—starting from a Jewish religious law, or a semi-democratic model—where some of the balancing and control mechanisms that characterize democratic rule are eliminated (Aloni et al., 2011; Fisher, 2018). Another notable example is the steady decline over the past few decades in the percentage of 18-year-old Israeli citizens enlisting in military service. In the past, the ideology of “the new Jew” (that is able to defend himself) and the reality of the need to survive in a hostile environment has turned military service into a nationally agreed-upon value. This value has very much eroded, most likely because of religious Jewish views that see the military service as corrupting religious values, as well as a minority advocating anti-war values (News 2, 2011).

#### *4.3 Political Manipulation—Divide and Conquer?*

Not all social changes can be attributed to natural processes. Some of these can be attributed to intentional or deliberate manipulation. This is a phenomenon that is not unique to Israel and can be seen in numerous countries around the world: the deliberate use and abuse of major media outlets and social network agents (sometimes referred to as “influencers”) to advance a political agenda (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Social scientists argue that this discourse exploits individual and group biases and feelings of deprivation (sometimes realistic and sometimes subjective) in order to garner support from certain public parties only because of opposition to an idea or a sub-population. In other words, it’s about raising support based on resistance to something, not offering value-added solutions to problems.

The phenomenon has become commonplace in European populism (e.g.: Liang, 2016), was often used by US president Trump (e.g.: Yang, 2017) and is now slowly filtering into Israeli politics.

In Israel, over the past decade and a half, new voices have suggested that this kind of voices have become a currency in the domestic political discourse. Politicians and political public figures use partisan discourse—that is, a discourse based on the resistance and defamation of other parties or factions in the population, and even specific individuals, in order to mobilize support for certain groups. For example, surveillance reports produced periodically by the Berl Katzenelson Foundation show a marked increase in the current election campaign (September, 2019) in partisan discourse and hate discourse coming from political and activist bodies. The main targets of this discourse in the current elections were: the political left, Arabs, immigrants from Ethiopia, specific personalities in the left and center parties, the IDF chief of staff, and more (Berl Katzenelson Foundation, 2019).

Simply put: In times of complexity and confusion, the political leadership not only does not take a clear stand to prevent or at least reduce divisive, partisan discourse, but rather encourages it because it serves its short term goals. If we accept this proposal, then it is a process that turns various parts of society against each other as part of a short-term strategy aimed at mobilizing support through internal division and hatred, while severing the basic fabric of society and causing severe damage over time.

The processes and factors mentioned above are not idiosyncratic. In truth, they nurture each other and accelerate the process of loss of trust, mutual support, and a sense of unity that can characterize people within a social group: feeding on sense of deprivation, over-compensation, mistrust and internal conflict. These feelings, accompanied by a lack of a visible common denominator and shared values (and sometimes a contradiction of values) and encouraging partisan discourse, create a collapse of a set of values, social norms of cooperation, and mutual respect. The processes of changing values create a local culture that encourages individuals not to choose the option of cooperating and trusting others.

The implication of this lack of trust and collaboration can be evident not only at the broader scheme of things, but rather on the mundane level: Let us think of a group of drivers who are stuck in a traffic jam. If everyone cooperates, stays in their lanes and waits for their turn to go, the traffic jams will dissipate much faster than when drivers pass lanes, bypassing other drivers, blocking others' traffic, thus perhaps gaining a small advantage for themselves but at the overall level—making the jam much worse than it could have been. This example can be applied to countless life situations—from mutual help, sharing the tax burden, working against unemployment, consumer behavior and even civilian conduct vis-à-vis the state authorities and more (see: Zysberg, 2018) and it seems that such processes and factors are turning people and citizens into a haphazard collection of almost hostile social groups. What to do?

## 5. Conclusions and Implications for the Social Sciences and Humanities

In light of the trends I mentioned above, some argue that Israeli society is moving down a slippery slope leading to social disintegration and possibly disaster (see, for example: Aloni et al., 2011; Jehoshaphat Ronen, 2002). However, if we adopt the prisoner's dilemma model as a model that

explains at least a good deal of the processes described here, it may also indicate actionable directions that may ease the situation and possibly improve it in the long run.

According to the prisoner's dilemma model, the key is trust, and fostering long-term cooperation required to reach the best possible outcomes for everyone involved. Sounds simple but in many ways this proposition contradicts human nature, if you will. This model requires that individuals take a risk in trusting others (whom they do not always know) to not take advantage of the situation to their own benefit, and reject immediate gratifications for the possibility of achieving a common goal (Mischel, 1974; Wulfert et al., 2002). How can we restore such behavioral and interpersonal patterns?

For one thing, the seeds of change are still here and they bear fruit from time to time. I was recently sitting in a cafe overlooking the street. An elderly woman tripped over the sidewalk and fell to the ground in a crowded street. Even before I was able to rise from my seat, a small crowd came to her help: young and old, religious and secular, Arabs and Jews. Help was offered, a chair appeared from nowhere and she was seated on it. Then someone handed her a bottle of water. Only after making sure she was well and able to continue on her way did the people disperse and went on with their lives. This kind of cooperation and mutual trust for shared value (helping the elderly) is, in my understanding, the key to mending the social rift using insights from the prisoner's dilemma model.

Here are some suggestions for focusing on key issues and processes derived from the prisoner's dilemma in the context of this article. I begin at the grassroots level and finish at the political-leadership level:

### *5.1 Identifying Core Values as the Basis for a New Social Common Denominator*

In a society that fails to agree on the big ideas, the small ideas can be a good start. What are the values we can agree on? You can start with a few, for example: the future of our children and the younger generation, the environment and the protection of the earth. Most companies and sub-companies can find values and ideas on which they can obtain sweeping or near-sweeping consent. Promoting these values at the educational, socio-cultural level will foster a sense of being able to experience success through collaboration and trust in others as a model and a basis for more "burning" values.

A few decades ago, the Israeli educational system achieved tremendous success in implementing the value of preserving wildflowers and refraining from picking up wildflowers (First, 2012). Adopting this model of consensus focusing on a value that is not very demanding or requires significant sacrifice from the individual and at the same time does not contradict his traditional-cultural identity is key. It allows for a relatively short-term sense of accomplishment and sets the stage for implementing mechanisms of cultural change that encourages collaborative trust as social value.

### *5.2 Enforcement Mechanisms that Encourage Confidence and Collaboration*

One of the mechanisms that allow value-related deterioration in any society is the sense of "lawlessness", where individuals feel they will not be held accountable for their deeds. Findings from social studies suggest that people, however normative, who feel that they will not be held personally responsible for their actions tend to be more violent, less normative than those who feel that they are

accountable (for example, see Postmes & Spears, 1998). Strengthening social, formal, and informal enforcement mechanisms that work against social norm violations (e.g., imagine a social sanction situation by members of a social network toward those who use violent language regardless of its content or orientation), and of course, strengthen and encourage enforcement of norms through formal and informal social enforcement mechanisms. This is not only the responsibility of the authorities, but rather the personal responsibility of members of social forums, online networks, and more. How do we reach such a state of things? Education. And education does not mean policing but modifying behavior patterns and imparting more effective conduct on the basis of shifting perception and interpretation of reality. Classical educational approaches to behavior modeling speak of an effective combination of reinforcements that encourage the appearance of desirable behavior (e.g., defining social champions of collaboration and mutual trust) and consistent punishment of unwanted behaviors (Freudenberg, 1978), but beyond conditioning, such modification will be realized mainly through acceptance of personal responsibility as key to interpersonal collaboration.

### *5.3 Re-Establishing a Sense of Community*

We live in an age of screen-mediated individualism. Interpersonal interaction is filtered and synthesized, and communities are the more fluid and malleable than ever before (see, for example: Samoa, 2014). However, a sense of community is the key to mutual trust and collaboration. So at the social level—creating and encouraging communities to collaborate for the common good—whether communities based on geographic criteria (neighborhoods or communities), social criteria and even around a common interest—is key. Encouraging collaborations within and among such communities can help prepare the foundation or building blocks of mutual trust and collaboration processes as an integral part of everyday culture.

### *5.4 And Last but not Least (for Now)—Responsible Leadership*

Leadership, by definition is about shaping social groups' behavior (Popper, 2004). In many ways, the political discourse and the divisive communication style adopted by leaders and political influencers must have some part in the current problematic situation and the public is largely aware of this. In the past, several attempts have been made to encourage elected officials to publicly commit to a more responsible public discourse (see, for example, the Social Discussion Convention, 2019), but these attempts have largely failed. At the same time, if the infrastructure for cultural change described in the previous paragraphs is established, the social pressures on elected officials to take social responsibility may rise again.

To what extent can the case of Israel serve as a case study for a broader, border-crossing discussion? Some evidence suggests it may: The USA experiences social fragmentation and confrontations at a level second only to its civil war; Numerous EU member countries find themselves coping with civil unrest, and rising divisive fundamentalism. I invite the reader to delve into the examples and models presented here and try to examine the extent to which they are applicable to their own social, cultural and political reality.

This is a process of profound and challenging cultural change. A process that requires the recruitment of all parts of society, political and community leadership, educators and researchers, managers and public opinion leaders, and of course—all of us as citizens. With all the difficulty in implementing such a change, understanding its underlying dynamics, as suggested by the prisoner's dilemma model, may help us work for better social and personal future.

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