

**EVALUATION
Of the Israeli/Palestinian Schoolbook Research Project
Commissioned by
The Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL)**

**By
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Executive Summary

The Israeli-Palestinian schoolbook research project was commissioned by the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL) and financed by the US State Department. It started in 2009 and was headed by Professor Bruce Wexler of Yale University, with Professor Daniel Bar-Tal of Tel Aviv University and Professor Sami Adwan of Bethlehem University as researchers aided by 9 research assistants – Jews and Arabs – all fluent in both Arabic and Hebrew.

Close to 170 Israeli and Palestinian schoolbooks were examined in order to study the attitude to the "other", to the 3 monotheistic religions and to issues related to the conflict. The methodology adopted for the project was quantitative: quotes were categorized and graded and then counted and the resulting figures served as a basis for general evaluation of the issues studied within the two curricula. In contrast with previous research projects, no qualitative methodology was used in this one.

According to the study findings both curricula generally refrained from dehumanizing and demonizing characterization of the "other". However, they both created a general "national narrative" presenting the "other" as enemy, with dearth of information that would show the "other" in positive or human light. The study further presented the lack of such information about the "other" as having signaled the delegitimization of its very presence. Finally, Israeli State schoolbooks were said to having manifested less such characteristics comparing to the Palestinian ones and to schoolbooks used in the Israeli independent Ultra-Orthodox schools.

In spite of the favorable distinction made regarding the Israeli State schoolbooks, the general picture portrayed by the study's conclusions was that both curricula were showing similar tendencies in the sense that both of them delegitimized the "other" and none provided its students with education for peace. Since that was clearly not the case with Israeli State schoolbooks – as proven by the quotes gathered for the research project – the study was criticized for having attempted to create a misleading appearance of equivalence and evenness between the two curricula.

Written by an independent schoolbook researcher who served as a member of the study's Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP), this evaluation paper deals with the particulars of that criticism, as follows:

- Absence of in-depth analysis of the individual quotes due to the study's virtually total reliance on quantitative methods alone. That practice has produced a cursory and non-exhaustive survey of the source material, which has made the two curricula look similar – while they are not – and also saved the researchers the trouble of dealing with problematic issues that might have been detected had the more thorough qualitative methodology been used. An example of such a problematic issue is the actual meaning of the "liberation struggle" concept appearing in Palestinian schoolbooks, which – by its unrestricted geographical scope – implicitly involves the liquidation of the State of Israel.
- Focusing on the "overall narrative" of each curriculum at the expense of meticulously scrutinizing the particulars of that narrative. Thus, the "negative" expressions in the Palestinian schoolbooks, for example, were tagged as part of the general Palestinian "national narrative" with no attempt to weigh their

impact on the attitude to the "other" and to peaceful solution to the conflict. Example: use of the religious concept of Jihad to enhance the violent struggle for the liberation of Palestine.

- Discarding relevant sources (both individual quotes and whole books) that would show the Palestinian curriculum in an unfavorable light.
- Overemphasis on textbooks used in the Israeli independent Ultra-Orthodox schools, much beyond their actual share in the Israeli curriculum, probably because they resembled to a certain extent the Palestinian books in terms of the attitude to the "other". Such a move helped in creating a general impression of evenness between the two curricula. By contrast, most of the schoolbooks issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Religious Affairs, which expressed a particularly anti-Jewish attitude, were not included in the study's source material.
- Creation of study categories that did not cover all the study themes, which resulted in neglect of important elements that would clarify better the significant differences existing between the two curricula. Examples: no category was created to cover the important themes of advocacy of peace with the "other" (as expressed in Israeli books) or advocacy of a violent struggle against it (as expressed in Palestinian books).
- "Forcing" certain quotes into categories where they did not belong in order not to leave those categories empty – especially those ones that would leave positive impressions of the Palestinian curriculum. Example: the category of Palestinian self-criticism in the context of the conflict.
- Questionable definition of some basic terms, such as "delegitimization" and "demonization", which has led to misrepresentation of the characteristics of the two curricula in these fields.
- There were several cases of misinterpretation of the source material. Examples: drawing a parallel between diverse concepts, such as patriotic self-sacrifice and religious martyrdom, or between clearly non-parallel cases, i.e., the absence of the labels "Israel" and "Palestine/Palestinian Authority" from maps. The difference between these two cases is that Israel already exists as a recognized sovereign state while Palestine still does not, and the Palestinian Authority as well is not a recognized sovereign state and its territories are too small and too scattered about to be labeled on the map.
- Ignoring the source material in certain cases while forming the study's conclusions – especially Israeli quotes that did not support the main conclusion, such as those ones that supplied the students with information about the "other".

In the author's view, the correction of all these points, and other ones that were found in the study, is a precondition for its improvement so that it would rightfully take its place as the most prominent project in the history of Israeli-Palestinian schoolbook research so far.

Introduction

"Pursuant to promoting development of a culture of peace and mutual respect in the Holy Land, the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land commissioned this study of how Israeli and Palestinian school books portray each other, the three Abrahamic faiths and themes related to conflict and peace." This is the rationale of the

project under discussion, taken from the Summary section of its final report that was released on February 4, 2013.¹

Yale University's Psychiatry Professor Bruce Wexler undertook the overall directorship mission. He selected Tel Aviv University's Prof. Daniel Bar-Tal, known for his former studies of Israeli schoolbooks, and Bethlehem University's Prof. Sami Adwan, with parallel experience of Palestinian schoolbook research, to head the project. Nine research assistants, Jewish and Arab, all fluent in both Arabic and Hebrew were entrusted with the task of reviewing the material according to guidelines provided by Professors Adwan and Bar-Tal. Professor Wexler himself, while having supervised the project at large, was also involved in the logistical and technical aspects of the computerized data input and analysis mechanism provided in cooperation with Yale's relevant departments by an American IT company.

In addition, a Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) of some 20 members, most of whom having been experienced in schoolbook research before, was established. Their role was limited to discussing the methodological aspects of the study and providing the research team with information derived from their own experience whenever necessary. They did not participate in actual research work and did not have access to the source material gathered for the project, or to its findings, until the work was over. Only then, that is, in May 2012, were they given a chance to express their views regarding the findings. Indeed, some of their remarks – not all – were accepted and incorporated in the study's final version (February 2013).

Contrary to former projects in this field that used qualitative methods of research, the methodology adopted for this study was purely quantitative, that is, statistical measurement of the various expressions found in the books within specific study themes after their categorization and rating. The accumulated figures served as a basis for general evaluation of the attitude of each of the two curricula to the "other" and to issues related to the conflict. That innovative approach seemed to have entailed both advantages and disadvantages and many us, SAP members, curiously awaited to see the results.

Steps were taken to create rigid data input procedures that would ensure maximum objectivity on the part of the research assistants, including direct input of categorized material into a remote data base to which none of them had access, and second examination of a certain percentage of the books by other research assistants of a different nationality. Such methods have made this particular research project unique in comparison with its predecessors, and the project should be commended for establishing this precedence. Notwithstanding these procedures, Professors Adwan and Bar-Tal appear to have had full discretion as far as the selection of the

¹ The study report (in English, Arabic and Hebrew), as well as the Israeli and Palestinian quotes gathered for the study, is available at a site named IsraeliPalestinianSchoolbooks.blogspot.com of which the address is as follows:
http://www.google.co.il/#site=&source=hp&q=israelipalestinianschoolbooks.blogspot.com&oq=IsraeliPalestinian&gs_l=hp.1.0.0j0i10j0i30j0i10i30j0i30j0i5i30j0i5i10i30j0i5i30.1594.7734.0.11406.18.16.0.2.2.0.203.2126.0j14j1.15.0...0.0...1c.1.11.hp.b9.JwLImQjY&bav=on.2.or.&bvm=bv.45645796.d.d2k&fp=c1e5997c6841e0b6&biw=1024&bih=571 The English version of the report has been used for reference in this paper. The Israeli and Palestinian quotes are separately numbered.

source material and its analysis were concerned, each within one's own sphere of expertise (that is, the Palestinian and Israeli schoolbooks, respectively).

Much work was invested in the project. It lasted some three years and was described as the most thorough study ever conducted in the history of Israeli and Palestinian schoolbook research. No doubt, Professors Wexler, Adwan and Bar-Tal, as well as the research assistants and the logistical and technological teams well deserve much appreciation.

The findings of this study, however, have become controversial. They were as follows (see p. 1 of the study report):

1. Dehumanizing and demonizing characterizations of the "other" as seen in textbooks elsewhere are rare in both Israeli and Palestinian books.
2. Both Israeli and Palestinian books present the "other" as enemy, chronicle negative actions by the "other" directed at the self-community and present the latter in positive terms.
3. There is lack of information about the religions, culture, economic and daily activities of the "other", or even the existence of the "other" on maps. The absence of this kind of information serves to deny the legitimate presence of the "other".
4. The negative phenomena mentioned in Points 2 and 3 are present and problematic in all school systems. However, compared to the Palestinian textbooks and to those books produced for the Israeli Ultra-Orthodox independent schools, Israeli State schoolbooks provide some more information about the "other", less negative overall characterization of the "other", and multiple examples of actions by Israelis against Palestinians that were criticized as wrong.

In spite of the favorable distinction made with regard to the Israeli State schoolbooks, one cannot avoid the feeling that the study strives to present a general picture of evenness between the Israeli and Palestinian curricula. The impression one gets while reading these conclusions is that both curricula delegitimize the "other" and none educates its students to peaceful co-existence with the "other", which is certainly not the case of the Israeli State curriculum (and see the discussion below).

That "imposed" evenness is not restricted to the conclusions alone. It is given support throughout the study by a series of factors, which raises disturbing questions regarding the study's motives and threatens to put its very credibility in jeopardy.

First among these factors is the problem inherent in the rigid quantitative methodology adopted for the study. Instead of analyzing each individual piece, as formerly done in most research projects, all pieces were gathered, classified in various categories and graded. Then, they were counted within each category/grade. The summed-up figures served as a basis for overall analysis of the characteristics of each of the two curricula. None of the pieces was studied in order to detect its actual meaning in the context of the conflict; none was compared to another in order to determine its relative weight and significance and, consequently, treat it with more care than the others; and no piece was connected to another with a view to revealing complex messages (and see towards the end of this paper the discussion of such a

case). This practice has produced a "flat" survey that failed, in my opinion, to reflect the real characteristics of the two curricula, thus making both look similar.

I do not mean to say that the use of the quantitative methodology in the study was a mistake. This innovative approach on the part of the researchers did provide us with an overall outlook as far as the two curricula were concerned and its statistical measurement did indicate certain differences between them. But that was not enough, probably, for true representation of these differences. It would have been much helpful, in my opinion, had the study adhered as well to more traditional methods of research, just as a precaution while experimenting with a new methodology in this particular field of research. It could well be that the two approaches complement each other.

Such a methodology that was exclusively based on statistical item-counting was also bound to, and indeed did miss the important dimension of omissions, the tracing of which is essential in every serious study of schoolbooks serving societies in conflict. That too has contributed to the said imposed evenness. The study ignored, for example, the two contrasting cases of non-advocacy of peace (in Palestinian Schoolbooks) or war (in Israeli schoolbooks) with the "other", which, again, has made them both look similar.

Second, the Palestinian Authority (PA) schoolbooks' unequivocally rejecting attitude to the Jewish/Israeli "other" has been played down by the removal of certain "incriminating" items from the source material (see details below), while others were neutralized by casting them into questionable categories, such as "values", or into the "national narrative", with no further reference.

Third, the Israeli schoolbooks' somewhat more open and accommodating attitude to the Palestinian/Arab "other" has been played down as well. One means used in this respect was blurring the Israeli books' sincere effort to foster the ideal of a peaceful solution to the conflict – which is clearly evident in the Israeli quotes (Nos. 12, 74, 193, 230, 236, 239, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 320, 322) but not mentioned in the report itself. Another means was disproportional enlargement of the Ultra-Orthodox schoolbooks' share in the report, in spite of the fact that the Ultra-Orthodox school systems are not considered part of mainstream Israel and are not subjected to governmental supervision. One should remember that the independently issued Ultra-Orthodox schoolbooks resemble to a certain degree the PA ones in terms of their negative attitude to the rival "other" and their less critical and more positive attitude to the "self". Consequently, their inclusion in the Israeli-Palestinian equation, as extensively done in the report, has made the general Israeli picture look darker. There is a stark contrast between this attitude and the minor reference given in the study to the schoolbooks issued by the Palestinian Ministry of religious Affairs (see below).

Fourth, the study chose to focus in its conclusions (Point 3 above) on the issue of delegitimization through lack of information, probably because this particular issue was perceived as a convenient platform for evenly criticizing both parties. The problem with this criticism is that Israeli State schoolbooks, unlike the Palestinian ones, do provide adequate information about the "other" on various levels: history of the Arabs and Islam, Arabic culture, Islamic religion, characteristics of Palestinian society inside Israel, etc. (see below). The only lacuna in this respect is the meager

information given to Israeli students about Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.² That was probably the foundation on which the study based its criticism that Israeli State schoolbooks delegitimized the Palestinian "other". The fact that these very books, unlike their Palestinian counterparts, do provide some objective information about the national struggle of the "other" against the self-community (see below), which implies certain legitimization that would refute such labeling, was ignored.

The same criticism was directed at the PA books on the grounds that they too did not provide any information about Israel. In this case the study ignored the fact that the absence of information about the Israeli/Jewish "other" in the Palestinian schoolbooks is part of a wider effort to delegitimize not only Israel's existence, but rather the mere presence of Jews in the country both currently and in the past – including their holy places – to an extent not to be seen in the Israeli books regarding the Palestinians (see below).

Thus, not only did the study seem to have created a state of evenness between the two curricula where such evenness did not really exist, but also focused on one specific issue only – delegitimization – at the expense of other issues, not less important, the discussion of which might have tipped the scales in favor of the Israeli State schoolbooks. One such issue is the examination of the extent of peace education provided by each of the two curricula.

What makes this seemingly biased approach stand out is the fact that the issue of delegitimization in this particular meaning appears in the conclusions only while in the study itself it has an entirely different meaning (see below).

Other features of the study contributing to the appearance of false evenness, with possible negative impact on the study's results as a whole, are to be discussed as well further on. They are as follows:

- The categories created for the purpose of the study were not inclusive enough and, consequently, did not cover all the relevant cases found in the source material. Significant conflict-related themes, such as open advocacy of peace/violence, were thus left unattended.
- Exaggerated use of the general concept of "narrative" has been noticed in the study, at the expense of meticulously scrutinizing minute details in the text, which has hindered full acquaintance with the true characteristics of each of the two curricula.
- Definitions of certain terms that were used as criteria for analysis within the study were sometimes widened (as the case was with "delegitimization") or limited – in the case of "demonization".

² There is only a five-page chapter titled "Characteristics of Arab Society" in *The Central Mountain [Range]: Judea, Samaria, [Judean] Foothills and the Jordan Valley* for the Higher Grades (2002) pp. 300-304 and a few more details on pp. 73-76. The book was not included in the study's source material although it was approved by the Israeli Ministry of Education for use in the upper grades during the school year of 5770 (2009/10). See the relevant Web site: <http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Applications/Mankal/EtsMedorim/6/6-3/HodaotVmeyda/H-2009-8b-6-3-5.htm>, for grades 10, 11, 12 [Hebrew]

- There were, in my opinion, cases of misinterpretation of the source material. Examples: overemphasis on the use in Israeli books of the names of Judea and Samaria, oversimplification of the maps presented there, blurring the distinction between the phenomenon of self-sacrifice in defense of one's country and the concept of religiously-motivated martyrdom, classification of the Islamized Biblical figures as Jewish, etc.

Having been part of this project in the capacity of a SAP member, albeit with no real influence on its results, I felt obliged to express my view of its final outcome for three main reasons:

1. As an independent schoolbook researcher myself, I thought it would be irresponsible on my part not to air my reservations regarding this particular study, which I considered to be incomplete, to say the least, and not to try to improve it.
2. The goal of this project is providing the Israeli and Palestinian ministries of education with the necessary recommendations for changing their respective curricula in order to make them more compatible with international standards of peace education. That necessitates a faithful diagnose of the real situation, away from politically correct messages, or otherwise the wrong prescription might be given, with fateful results.
3. Though not specifically stated, this particular project has been considered by some to be the "final word" in the debate concerning the issue of incitement in the PA schoolbooks. Due to its present shortcomings it certainly cannot provide that final word for the moment. It might do so after its improvement. This evaluating paper is intended to bring it to that stage.

Following is my evaluation according to the project's various fields.

Scope of the Source Material and Selection Criteria

A study of this magnitude, with two researchers and nine research assistants who were given ample financial resources and, in fact, unlimited time for their work, and who were supported by a computerized system of data collection and analysis developed especially for the project, could have covered the entire curriculum of the two parties in the relevant subjects (language and literature, grammar, religious studies, national and civic education, history and geography). The beginning was promising: 381 Israeli State schoolbooks and 121 Israeli Ultra-Orthodox textbooks of the above-mentioned study subjects, as well as 142 and 24 schoolbooks issued by the Palestinian Authority's Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs, respectively, were purchased.³ An initial examination of the books found out that 187 Israeli books (37%) and 40 Palestinian ones (24%) did not contain relevant material for the study and were accordingly discarded. The reminder – 194 Israeli and 126 Palestinian

³ The PA books issued by the Ministry of the Endowments and Religious Affairs are studied in a dozen or so schools operated by the ministry, in which boys and girls in grades 7-12 are taught specific religious subjects in addition to the general curriculum. Although the number of these students is small, they prepare themselves – including female students – for religious duties, such as preaching, which increases their importance in society beyond their actual number. Besides, all these books are printed by a PA body (the ministry) and, thus, are part of the general PA source material, unlike the Israeli Ultra-Orthodox ones which are free of any state control and whose readers do not play a significant role in Israeli society and economy after graduation, hardly serve in the army, etc. Nevertheless, they have been included in the study and given more weight than the one they deserve.

textbooks – were classified according to their volume of relevant content. Those with over 70% relevant material were all included (8 Israeli and 3 Palestinian books) plus various other books with smaller percentage of relevant material, some of which having been randomly selected. All in all, of the remaining 194 Israeli and 126 Palestinian books, 74 (38%) and 94 (75%) ones, respectively, were used as sources.⁴

Bearing in mind that Israeli schoolbooks are generally 2-2½ times thicker than their Palestinian counterparts and far richer in both textual and non-textual material, one could accept in principle this huge difference in representation and consider the numbers above impressive. However, the exclusion of a certain percentage of relevant material from a study based entirely on statistical measurement of various types of expression might have diminished its accuracy. It is true that, statistically, if the sample is representative, that is all that is needed. But in this particular case of a highly controversial issue like the existence, or non-existence, of incitement against the "other" in the books, all 194 + 126 books should have been, and still need to be included in the study, in my opinion, as a precondition for its improvement, especially if we are interested in a strategy that captures all serious lapses.

Even more so, when the randomly excluded books on the Palestinian side happen to contain extremely negative, i.e., highly demonizing and even dehumanizing characterizations of the "other". Prominent among these excluded books are the ones issued by the PA Ministry of the Endowments and Religious Affairs for use in its own schools (inaccurately described as "independent" in the report – p. 1). They were purchased, but were hardly used. The two most revealing books of this kind – *Holy Koran and its Studies* and *Noble Hadith and its Studies*, both for grade 11 – are absent from the source material.

Moreover, even the inclusion of a certain book in the project's source material did not guarantee its actual cover-to-cover survey. There were cases in which a relevant item in a textbook was left out while another was taken in (see the underlined items within the list below). The improved study must be devoid of this kind of censorship.

The improved study should include as well a substantial number of representative non-textual pieces (photographs, illustrations, charts and graphs) that were reportedly studied and taken into account within the study statistics. None of these has been scanned, contrary to the practice followed in former studies accomplished on this subject. Even a list of these items has not been given, which makes it impossible for anyone who will ever try to check the validity of the judgment made in this study on the basis of such material, to find these items in the books independently. Particular attention should be given in the improved study to the provision of representative samples of the 341 maps from both sides that were examined by the research team, as claimed in the report (p. 42), since none of them is reproduced in the present study.

Following is a list of 38 items missing from the PA source material of this study, several of which having featured in former studies as examples of the PA negative attitudes to Israel and Jews:

⁴ See the report, pp. 7-8, on the selection process.

1. *Reading and Texts*, Grade 9, Part 2 (2007) p. 36: A piece enumerating Palestine's various historical periods moves directly from the Bronze Age (3200-1200 BC) to Babylonian and Persian rule (586-332 BC), thus totally obliterating the Israelite-Jewish period in between. This is a clear-cut denial of the Jews' historical presence in the country. It should be noted that there are some other cases in the PA books where that presence is briefly mentioned.
2. *National Education, Grade 7* (2010) p. 55: A text presenting the Jewish holy places of the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem as Muslim holy places facing Judaization attempts. This is one of the very few explicit cases in which the existence of Jewish holy places in the country is denied, while in most other cases the denial is implicit, namely, non-mentioning of Jewish holy places at all, unlike the case of Muslim and Christian holy places.⁵ In no place do the PA books refer to a Jewish holy place in the country as such (with one exception that no longer exists – see the next item).
3. *National Education, Grade 7* (2010) p. 54: A photograph of Rachel's Tomb with the caption "Mosque of Bilal Ibn Rabbah". That holy place was first renamed in a textbook issued in 2001, while an earlier textbook issued in 1996 still calls the place "Rachel's Tomb".⁶
4. *National Education, Grade 6* (2009) p. 10: A chart presenting the figures of Palestine's inhabitants on Feb. 1, 1999 includes the Palestinians of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, pre-1967 Israel (called "Interior" in the text in order to avoid the term "pre-67 Israel") and even the Palestinians of the Diaspora, while Israel's 5.5 million Jews are not included, which indicates their being considered illegitimate residents in the country.
5. *National Education, Grade 2, Part 1* (2009) p. 7 (and also on the cover): A British Mandate stamp is reproduced in the book with the Hebrew inscription erased, probably in an attempt to deny the Hebrew language its official status in the country historically.
6. *History of the Ancient Civilizations, Grade 5* (2009) p. 27: A text box naming the modern states of the Levant region (*Bilad al-Sham* in Arabic) as Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Israel, a sovereign state by all standards, is missing and non-sovereign Palestine has taken its place.
7. *National Education, Grade 2, Part 1* (2009) p. 16: A map of the Arab world with Palestine incorporating Israel's territory under a title saying "Palestine is Arab and Muslim", thus denying Israel's existence.
8. *National Education, Grade 2, Part 2* (2009) p. 25: A map of the whole country with the (Israeli) Negev region contoured and the student is asked to color it "on the map of Palestine".
9. *National Education, Grade 4, Part 1* (2003 and 2011) p. 43: Israel's pre-1967 territories are referred to as "the lands of 1948", thus expressing non-recognition of the State of Israel.
10. *Modern and Contemporary History of Palestine, Grade 11, Part 2* (2007) p. 57: A text box defining the Green Line as a line on the map that separates the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 from those ones that were occupied in 1948, thus delegitimizing Israel's existence within its pre-67 boundaries.

⁵ Israeli schoolbooks, by contrast, do recognize that some Jewish holy places are sacred to Muslims as well: see Israeli quotes Nos. 310, 398.

⁶ See *National Education, Grade 7* (2001) p. 55 and *Palestinian National Education, Grade 6* (1996) p. 89, respectively.

11. *History of the Arabs and Muslims*, Grade 6 (2009) p. 133: A text saying that the Prophet of Islam ordered his secretary Zayd Ibn Thabet to learn the Jews' language in order to guard against their trickery.
12. *Reading and Texts*, Grade 8, Part 2 (2007) p. 16: A literary piece features the following text: "Your enemies killed your children, split open your women's bellies, took your revered elderly men by the beard and led them to the death pits". This piece was excluded from the source material on the grounds that it mentioned neither Israel nor the Jews and was originally written in the early 20th century, probably against the Italian invasion of Ottoman Libya in 1911. But this very piece has been since used against several other enemies and its inclusion in a PA schoolbook today has an incitement potential against the present enemy – Israel.
13. *Arabic Language – Linguistic Sciences*, Grade 12 (2007) p. 61: A grammar exercise includes a poetical verse saying: "How come that snakes invade us while we still observe the *Dhimmi* pact".⁷
14. *Our Beautiful Language*, Grade 1, Part 1 (2008) p. 132: An illustrated scene of a school show presents an Israeli soldier pointing his gun at an Arab elderly couple.
15. *Our Beautiful Language*, Grade 2, Part 1 (2009) p. 80: An illustration of a bulldozer accompanied by (Israeli) soldiers demolishing a house amidst the protest of an Arab family.
16. *Modern and Contemporary History of the World*, Grade 10 (2010) p. 51: A text defining Zionism as a racist and imperialist movement.
17. *Holy Koran and its Studies*, Grade 11 (1996) p. 66: A text enumerating the Jews' negative traits.
18. *Holy Koran and its Studies*, Grade 11 (1996) pp. 115-116, 117: – do –
19. *Holy Koran and its Studies*, Grade 11 (1996) p. 136: A text presenting the Jews as the Muslims' enemies.
20. *Holy Koran and its Studies*, Grade 11 (1996) p. 49: A text presenting the Jews as God's enemies.
21. *Holy Koran and its Studies*, Grade 11 (1996) p. 38: A text presenting the Jews as deceitful and treacherous.
22. *Noble Hadith and its Studies*, Grade 11 (1996) pp. 200-203: A *Hadith* discussing the event of killing the Jews by the Muslims on Judgment Day is accompanied by an anti-Jewish commentary of which a part has been given in the report but not the text that interprets the *Hadith* itself. This particular text contains a belligerent message.
23. *The Muslim World at Present*, Grade 12 (1996) p. 117: A map showing Israel within its pre-1967 borders as "the occupied territory".
24. *Islamic Education*, Grade 9, Part 1 (2010) p. 60: A text presenting Jihad as second in importance only to belief in God.
25. *Reading and Texts*, Grade 9, Part 1 (2010) p. 24: An assignment related to a poem (pages 20-21) in which the students are asked to connect between a verse and a feeling. The relevant connection is between expressions of violent struggle and the hope for the liberation of Palestine. The poem was given in the report, but not the assignment.

⁷ The original poem was written by a Palestinian poet against the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, but the appearance of this particular verse in a PA schoolbook assumes, under the specific conditions of the present conflict, an obvious anti-Jewish message.

26. *Our Beautiful Language*, Grade 5, Part 1 (2004 and 2011) pp. 88, 65, respectively: A poem describing the violent return of the refugees with phrases such as "We shall return... under the flags of glory, Jihad and struggle, with blood and sacrifice..."
27. *Arabic Language – Reading, Literature, Critique*, Grade 12 (2010) p.108: A text saying that Palestine is the land of *Ribat* (Standing on guard against the enemies of Islam) and Jihad.
28. *Islamic Education*, Grade 12 (2010) p. 87: A text saying that Palestine is in a state of *Ribat* until the Day of Judgment.
29. *Linguistic Sciences*, Grade 10 (2010) p. 146: A text saying that the martyr's rank is above all ranks.
30. *Arabic Language – Linguistic Sciences*, Grade 12 (2010) p. 8: A verse from a poem equating martyrdom with a wedding party.
31. *Religious Subjects for Grade 8 – Unit 3: Noble Prophetic Sayings [Hadith]* (n.d.) p. 12: A text making Jihad for Palestine obligatory.
32. *Religious Subjects for Grade 9 – Unit 2: Pious Forefathers* (1993) p. 67: A text mentioning the obligation of liberating Jerusalem from the Jews.
33. *Holy Koran and its Studies*, Grade 11 (1996) p. 38: A text saying that the Christians have distorted the New Testament.
34. *Holy Koran and its Studies*, Grade 11 (1996) p. 41: A text discussing the religious errors of Jews and Christians.
35. *Religious Texts for Grade 8 – Unit 3: Noble Prophetic Sayings [Hadith]* (n.d.) p. 31: A text stating that infidels (that is, Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims) are rewarded for doing good in this world only and not in the next.
36. *Holy Koran and its Studies*, Grade 11 (1996) p. 104: A text forbidding Muslims to befriend non-Muslims.
37. *Holy Koran and its Studies*, Grade 11 (1996) p. 107: – do –
38. *Religious Subjects for Grade 10* (n.d.) p. 248: A text allowing Muslims to break promises given to non-Muslims if they find such a move compatible with their interests.

Such a relatively large number of significant pieces would have probably affected the PA schoolbooks' general image negatively had they been added to the source material, particularly within those categories the contents of which the study has so far described as "rare". In other words, the omissions have caused a certain misrepresentation of the general picture and, consequently, yielded slanted conclusions. For example, on page 14 of the report one finds the following conclusion: "In other words, there were only six L[iterary] P[iece]s in the 9,964 pages of Palestinian books reviewed that were rated as portraying the other in extreme negative ways other than as the enemy, and none of these six were general dehumanizing characterizations of personal traits of Jews or Israelis." The above given list provides such pieces, which makes the word "none" in that conclusion inappropriate.

Omissions occurred as well, although to a far lesser extent, in the case of some "positive" items in the Israeli books. Example: A piece stressing that the solution to the conflict is peace, not a military one, and that it is necessary to continue on the road to peace resolutely and devotedly (*In the Language of Lines: Reader for State Religious Schools, Book 6*, 2007, p. 297), which is a clear manifestation of education for peace. On the opposite end, a "negative" piece was artificially created: In the April

2012 draft report, the following text – "Now you see [here] the foxes, the Bedouins, the destruction and the desolation. You will be privileged to see [in the future] old men and women, as well as children, on the streets of this new settlement" (*A Delightful Land: The Middle and Southern Coastal Plain*, 1999, p. 139) – was shortened to include the following phrase only: "Now you see the foxes, Bedouins" and categorized as "extreme negative characterization of the 'other'",⁸ which was, simply put, a distortion of the source material. Following an e-mail I sent on this issue to all involved on May 12, 2012, the shortened version was omitted from the final February 2013 report. Yet, one may still wonder whether it has remained part of the statistics, to the detriment of the Israeli schoolbooks' general image (the Ultra-Orthodox books in this particular case).

When approached on the issue of omissions, the researchers gave three explanations:

1. Some items were not explicit enough. As declared by the research team (in their January 31, 2013 e-mail response to me): "the R[esearch] A[ssistant]s were trained to limit references and focus on clear statements." Although in that particular case (that is, the case of the "invading snakes", No. 13 on the list above) the team admitted that "we can see how this could be seen as a dehumanizing reference to Israel", they did not change their practice.

It should be remembered that anti-"other" expressions in schoolbooks of societies in a conflict are not always explicit, especially when the curriculum is financed by foreign donors, as the case is with the PA. Therefore, extremely harsh anti-"other" pieces should be given special attention even if the "other" in these cases is not specified. One needs to assess such pieces in the context of the conflict atmosphere, on the assumption that the missing details will be supplied to the students by the teachers in class.

2. Other items were considered "scriptural text" that no one was supposed to analyze. The researchers stated (in their said e-mail): "We all agreed that the Holy Scriptures themselves were not to be studied, so the book above, the religious book of the Prophet's Hadith, was not studied." And later on, in reference to other items: "Holy scriptures are not part of the study."

But none of the missing items on the list was scriptural! They were all taken from textbooks of religious subjects studied in PA schools. These books contain, beside quotations from the Scriptures (Koran and *Hadith* and also Old and New Testament in Christian Education textbooks), non-scriptural material as well, which was the source of the items on the list. The researchers' answer leaves one truly perplexed.

Perplexity further increases as the researchers continue saying: "Some Hadith are included when they are cited in other books as examples of a point being made in that book, thus some Hadith are among the quotes." Indeed, the study's source material includes numerous quotations from both Koran and *Hadith* in various contexts, which makes one wonder why that particular

⁸ "Victims of Our Own Narratives?": Portrayal of the "Other" in Israeli and Palestinian School Books, Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, Study Report, April 26, 2012, p. 44 (available to all SAP members).

Hadith was rejected (or, more accurately, the non-scriptural commentary directly related to it).

Obviously, anyone would agree with the researchers that, although the Scriptures per se should not be analyzed in the context of the conflict, their utilization in favor or against a certain point related to the conflict should become part and parcel of the study. If we are allowed (as indeed done in the study) to quote from the textbooks scriptural texts that emphasize love and tolerance toward the "other", why, then, not do the same with scriptural texts that convey the opposite message?

Moreover, such "negative" texts no doubt exist in the Holy Scriptures, but the decision to include them in the schoolbooks is solely the educators'. When educators do incorporate such texts in their schoolbooks they actually express certain attitudes a study of this kind should expose. Unfortunately, this study has chosen to ignore this particular *Hadith* and the text immediately accompanying it and, thus, failed to fulfill a fundamental mission on the road to peace, in contrast to its above-cited rationale.

3. Other quotes just conveyed a recurring message within the general narrative the characteristics of which have been already identified and there was no point in repeating that message. The recurring remarks in the researchers' answer that a certain piece was a "fairly typical quote in the [Palestinian] national narrative" and another was "indeed part of the Palestinian national narrative" or that "we cite multiple such examples" – all insinuated that the research team skipped some quotes on the assumption that they had already gathered a sufficient number of similar ones that conveyed the same message.

That approach might sound logical in a research based on text analysis (though these omitted items in particular are most significant and ought to be included in such a study), but surely not in the case of the present study that applies statistical measures in which every item counts, literally. Ignoring a certain number of quotes of certain types is bound to distort the final statistical result. The researchers' argument – when encountered with this criticism in their press conferences – that they had already gathered enough quotes for statistical purposes and that those omitted ones would not change the overall picture, is unacceptable, in my opinion.

Still, and in spite of the absence of significant items from the source material, a relatively large number of relevant quotes were gathered for the purpose of the study. Together they provided rich information that may have served as a basis for extensive research of the attitudes of each of the two curricula to the "other" and to peace. In the following paragraphs I will review how this rich material was handled.

Categorization

As already said, the present study has missed a great opportunity of real in-depth research of such an amount of Palestinian and Israeli schoolbook material. By adopting a statistically-based methodology that refrained – contrary to the practice in former studies – from qualitative analysis of the individual pieces, the richly colorful material in the books has produced a dull black-and-white picture. Nuances and

implicit messages in the books – so important in conflict research – disappeared and a "flat" and uniform description came to the fore instead.

Had the categories themselves been more refined and inclusive, the overall picture would have been clearer, in my opinion. But that does not seem to have been the case, unfortunately, as I will try to show in the following lines.

For the purpose of this study five thematic areas were chosen with their categories:

The "Other"

- Grading the description of the "other" in the books (very negative, negative, neutral, positive, very positive)
- Grading the description of the acts of the "other" (– do –)
- Defining the aspirations of the "other" as presented in the books (ranging from "destruction" and "domination" to "equal co-existence" in one or two states, etc.)
- Grading the presentation of the "other" in photographs and illustrations (very negative, negative, neutral, positive, very positive)

The Self Community

- Grading the description of the acts of the self community (very negative, negative, neutral, positive, very positive, other)
- Defining the role of the self collective in the acts (victim, neutral, perpetrator, protector, supporter, bystander, other)

Religion (Islam & Christianity in Israeli books, Judaism & Christianity in PA books)

- Measuring the frequency of reference (by %)
- Measuring the richness of the information provided (by a scale of 0-2)
- Grading the presentation of the specific religion (very negative, negative, etc.)

Peace

- Measuring the frequency of references to peace in the books
- Defining peace's characteristics (realistic, idealistic, warm, cold, win-win, etc.)

Values

- Enumerating the values of the self community
- Enumerating the values of the "other"

In addition, over 300 maps from both sides were examined to find out whether and how the "other" was referred to within the territorial space between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. The portrayal of the "other" in poems (very negative, negative, etc.) was studied separately although it clearly belonged to the first thematic area.

From first glance one realizes that this is a very crude classification. What does it mean to have a "negative" view of the "other"? After all, this is a conflict in which the two parties regard each other as enemy. Is it not a "negative" view? Why, then, not differentiate between various kinds of perceptions – negative and non-negative – which would reveal the real attitude to the "other" as a collective and as individuals?

For example: is the "other" recognized as equal in status to the "self" (a nation vs. a nation, for example)? Is it referred to as a collective of ordinary human beings, or as an alien threatening group only? What emotions are involved while discussing the "other" – revenge, hatred, reconciliation, empathy, etc.?

Further examination of the categories in this particular thematic area reveals that one classification is clearly missing: Delegitimization. In a conflict where each of the two parties clings to the same piece of land that each of them considers to be its only homeland, which was indeed in certain historical periods exclusively its own, there is a strong tendency to regard the "other" as foreign intruders, which may lead to total delegitimization of that "other". Delegitimization is not always explicit, which makes it obligatory in any schoolbook research of societies in conflict to try to trace its implicit manifestations as well. Unfortunately, delegitimization does not exist here as a category, or sub-category, and none of the study queries does refer to this issue.

The reason for this omission was revealed during the SAP meeting in Jerusalem in May 2012. Professor Daniel Bar-Tal, one of the two researchers, then explained that he had developed in his former works a professional definition of the term, different from the one many SAP members had in mind. Delegitimization, according to his definition, was "categorization of a group or groups into extreme negative social categories which are excluded from human groups." Dehumanization and outcasting were included as well among the varied phenomena of delegitimization, with expressions like "Vandals" and "Huns" as examples.⁹ As a result, the recurring cases in PA books of ignoring the Jewish/Israeli "other" deliberately without degrading it slipped away from scrutiny. For example, the repeating references in the PA books to Muslim and Christian holy places in the country, with no mentioning of any Jewish holy place there, were not discussed in the report although the researchers were aware of that phenomenon. They say in their above-mentioned response to my e-mail regarding the omitted quotes in this particular case: "The absence of information about Jewish holy sites is a significant problem in PA books..."¹⁰

Following comments by Prof. Elihu Richter and other SAP members on this issue during and after their initial examination of the study in May 2012, a few sentences referring to delegitimization in its more common meaning were introduced into the study (on pp. 2, 14, 46 and 49). Delegitimization in this particular sense was even made a central finding of this study (see below). Yet, in the absence of a systematic study of this issue on the basis of the source material, no evidence was presented and both parties were evenly accused of delegitimizing each other by means of failing to provide information about various aspects related to the "other" – in total contradiction to significant pieces of information about the "other" found in Israeli schoolbooks (see below in the Findings section). On the other hand, the explicit cases

⁹See Prof. Bar-Tal's article: "Causes and Consequences of Delegitimization: Models of Conflict and Ethnocentrism", *Journal of Social Issues*, 1990, 46 (1), pp. 65-81. The quotes have been taken from p. 3 of the reprint version (the first page of the article itself).

¹⁰ They further add: "...and one documented in the report." The report, however, includes the issue of non-reference to Jewish holy places within the larger case of non-reference to all particulars of Jewish religion and restricts this phenomenon to 62% only of the Palestinian source material (p. 35), which distorts the real picture of total denial of the existence of Jewish holy places in the country – as indeed proven by the fact that none of the books (100% of the source material) does refer to a Jewish holy place as such, and as shown in the explicit cases of such denial that were excluded from the study, and see items Nos. 2, 3 on the list of the omitted PA quotes.

of delegitimization appearing in the PA schoolbooks were not referred to and were not even included in the study's source material (see Nos. 1-10, 23 on the list of omitted items above).

Another very important category missing in the thematic area of peace is whether the books express support for peaceful resolution of the conflict with the "other". It is not enough to find in the curriculum expressions talking favorably of peace in general terms, since almost all world societies perceive peace as an ideal. It is the actual adoption of this ideal within the relationship with the rival "other" that counts. In the absence of such a category an extremely important aspect of the conflict has not been dealt with.

And this is the case as well with the opposite concept of war, which is not even partly attended to, unlike peace. The question whether a curriculum promotes a violent struggle against the "other" was never asked and thus has denied the study an important insight. Another neglected question relates to the boundaries of the territory to be liberated in case a liberation struggle is promoted in the textbooks.

It is not that belligerent expressions were not touched. References in the PA textbooks to the Islamic traditional ideals of *Ribat*, Jihad, martyrdom [*shahadah*] and martyr [*shahid*] were quoted (though some of the most significant ones were not, and see the list above). But instead of putting those of them that specifically relate to the present conflict within an appropriate category that would reflect violent tendencies in the curriculum, they were included in another category titled "Values". This way, their significant role in the context of the conflict was neutralized: they have no connection whatsoever to the future of the conflict; they are just "values".

Another "value" that looked a bit strange and was said to have existed in Israeli schoolbooks was "occupation/expansion" (p. 38 of the report). Being familiar with the contents of Israeli schoolbooks it was hard for me to believe that they mentioned such a value in that very language. I therefore assumed that that definition was given to specific pieces in Israeli books that refer to the historical relations between Jews and the areas of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). But this very type of relationship exists as well between Palestinians and areas that are now inside Israel proper, which is often manifested in their schoolbooks. It is puzzling, then, why the Palestinians' parallel expressions of affinity to these Israeli areas were not styled "expansion" as well and added to the "Values" category.

In short, the "Values" category as presented in the study does not fully and adequately serve the purposes of a research of this kind and, therefore, is in need for a massive reshuffle, in my opinion.

Another missing category is one related to the conflict itself. In spite of its mentioning in the project's rationale and notwithstanding the set of questions dedicated to this issue (p. 9 of the report), the conflict per se does not appear within a definite category of its own in the study.

As a matter of fact, some SAP members did suggest several other criteria that seemed to be more in line with such an investigative study. Unfortunately, their suggestions remained unheeded. Had they been accepted – even partly – the study might have

looked more focused. Following is a set of suggested categories I presented to the research team in the course of their work, just for the sake of comparison (it could serve as a universal model for research of a curriculum of any society in a conflict situation, not just in the particular case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict):

Presentation of the Conflict

- The essence of the conflict from the point of view of the "self": Is it a struggle for independence, territory and resources, national glory, religious supremacy, mere survival, other goals?
- Duration: Does the conflict have specific beginning/ending points or is it an eternal struggle from time immemorial?
- Level: Is it a simple conflict over worldly matters or a metaphysical struggle on all levels between the forces of good and evil?
- Responsibility: Who is responsible for the emergence of the conflict – the "self", the "other", a third party – separately or together, and to what extent?

Presentation of the "Self" within the Conflict

- Definition: How is the "self" defined in the context of the conflict – a national-ethnic entity, a religious group, a civil society, other?
- Argumentation: What are the basic arguments of the "self" in the context of the conflict and in what fields (historical, religious, national, etc.)?
- Justice: Is the "self" the only just party within the conflict?
- History: How is the history of the "self" presented in this context?
- Geography: What are the boundaries of the territory claimed by the "self"?
- Victimization: Is the "self" presented solely as a victim of the "other" or is it an active party contributing to the conflict as well to a certain degree?
- Self criticism: Is there any self criticism of the "self" in respect of its attitude to the "other" or its behavior in the conflict?

Presentation of the Other Party to the Conflict

- Definition: How is the "other" defined in the context of the conflict (see possibilities above)?
- Argumentation: Are the basic arguments of the "other" mentioned? In what way? Is there an attempt to treat them objectively? Is there an attempt to understand/annul/refute them?
- Presence: Is the "other" present or absent historically, geographically, demographically and religiously in the disputed territory – in text, photographs, graphs, charts or on maps?
- Legitimacy: Is the "other" treated as a legitimate or illegitimate party politically? Is its political entity officially recognized?
- Equality: Is the "other" presented on the same footing as the "self" in terms of definition (i.e., a nation vs. a nation, etc.), interests and rights (i.e., it has interests and rights of its own) or is it denied such a status?
- Portrayal: Is the "other" portrayed as a society of ordinary human beings or is it stereotyped, prejudiced, demonized, dehumanized as a group and/or as individuals? Are individuals of the "other" mentioned at all, or the "other" is referred to as a group only?
- Objectivity: Does the material about the "other" also contain, alongside possible negative description, objective information about its history, society,

culture, religion, political structure, etc.? To what extent – comparing to the negative references to the "other" (if any)?

- Terminology: Does the material about the "other" include denominatives and phrases that could create a positive/negative impression of the "other"?
- Emotions: Is the "other" presented in a way that may create emotions of affinity/aversion, love/hatred, respect/derision, friendliness/vengeance, etc.?
- Level of threat: What exactly is the threat to the "self" posed by the "other", if any?
- Accusation: What particular accusations are directed at the "other" (how many and in what fields)?
- Empathy: Is there any degree of empathy on the part of the "self" regarding the pain and suffering of the "other"?
- Friendship: Are friendly relations between individuals of the "self" and the "other" mentioned? Are such relations encouraged/discouraged or at least looked upon favorably/unfavorably?
- Are there explicit expressions in favor/against prejudice and stereotypes as far as the "other" is concerned?

Reference to Peace/Violence in the Context of the Conflict

- Peace vs. war: Is there an open call for peace/war/violent struggle with the "other"?
- Conflict resolution: Is a peaceful/violent resolution of the conflict advocated?
- Limits: Does a promoted violent struggle against the "other" have territorial/operational/moral or other limits? Does a promoted peaceful resolution of the conflict have any limits? If so, in what fields?
- Future horizons: Does the material present a future vision of peaceful relations with the "other"? If so, in what fields? In case of complete victory over the "other" as a result of a violent struggle, does the material speak of the fate of the vanquished "other"? If so, in what terms?
- Future and past violence: Are there any violent expressions against the "other" in the text? What is the attitude to past violent actions against the "other" on the part of the "self" or of a third party?
- Legitimacy: To what extent, if any, is peace/violence justified and/or promoted logically, legally, morally, religiously, etc.?

In light of the discussion of this issue so far I would suggest that any move towards improving the present study start with redefining and fine-tuning of its categories.

Beyond the issue of category formation, there were also cases in the study in which certain pieces seemed to have been "forced" into specific categories so that those categories would not be left empty due to the scarcity of the material that was supposed to fill them. That practice also helped in creating an impression of evenness between the two curricula.

One such case is the story appearing in a Palestinian schoolbook about an injustice done to an old Jew which was corrected by Caliph Omar. This is the only example given in the category of "Self-Criticism" in the PA books (pp. 31-32 of the report). It seems that the research team did not find real examples of self-criticism in these books, which made it resort to this piece of pseudo-self-criticism in order to fill in that

category, in an attempt to balance parallel cases in Israeli schoolbooks cited in the study.

Another case is related to the fact that very meager information is given in the Palestinian books about Jewish religion. In order to answer this deficiency, Jewish traditional figures such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron and David were "mobilized" to fill in that specific category in the PA books (pp. 36-37 of the report). Yet, one should know that all of them (as well as other Jewish historical/mythical figures such as Joseph and Solomon) are considered in Islam God's prophets and, as such, they are detached from their Jewish environment and become Islamic figures. Hence, the study's tendency to present the references to these figures in Palestinian schoolbooks as references to Jewish figures looks somewhat odd.

These very figures also fill in the category of "Positive Description of the Acts of the Other" in the Palestinian books (p. 22), as no other example was probably found.

In light of the above, it would be safe to say that the PA textbooks do not contain true self-criticism in the context of the conflict, positive description of the acts of the rival "other" and meaningful information about the Jewish religion, in spite of the efforts made in the study to prove the opposite.

In addition to the above-mentioned cases of pieces "forced" into certain categories, there were pieces that should not have been included in the study in the first place. Examples: a quoted piece from a PA book that talks about the suffering inflicted by the Crusaders (Palestinian quote No. 365) and a poem telling the story of Jamilah Buheired who was imprisoned and tortured in Algeria by the French in the late 1950s (No. 220). None of these pieces is related to the present conflict, much the same as another one that talks of the suffering of Libyan Jews in World War II (Israeli quote No. 285), since the perpetrators in this latter case were Nazi Germany and its ally, the Italian Fascist government that ruled Libya at that time, rather than the local Arab population.

Few mistakes were found as well. Examples: in an Israeli quote (No. 65) the number of Jews killed in Baghdad during the two-day "*Farhud*" (Pogrom) in 1941 should be 135 and not 135,000 as mistakenly put in the report. Among the Palestinian quotes, the Ottoman term *Iradah Saniyyah* "Sublime Will" that defines a Sultan's decree was pronounced *Iradah Sunniyyah* and translated "Sunni will" (No. 380). In another PA quote (No. 176) the research team translated the name of the main figure in a story about the Deir Yassin massacre – Hayat ("life"). All these mistakes can be easily corrected.

Having covered the two dimensions of selection and organization of the source material, it is now time to check the third important dimension of the study, that is, interpretation of the source material.

Findings and Conclusions

As already stated, the main study findings were as follows (pp. 46-47):

1. Dehumanizing and demonizing characterizations of the other as seen in textbooks elsewhere... are rare in both Israeli and Palestinian books.

2. Both Israeli and Palestinian books present exclusive unilateral national narratives that present a wealth of information about the other as enemy and a dearth of information about the other in positive or human light...
3. The absence of information of various kinds about the other serves to delegitimize the presence of the other. This important problem can be addressed by the addition of information about the culture, religions, and everyday activities of the other.
4. The negative bias in presentation of the other, the positive bias in presentation of the self, and the absence of images and information about the other are more pronounced in the Israeli Ultra-Orthodox and Palestinian books than in the Israeli State books, and these differences are statistically significant...

Except for Finding 4, all the above-given statements seem to reflect reality partly only, in my opinion, which actually helps to create improper "balance" between the two parties. Following are some clarifications:

Finding 1

Cases of dehumanization are indeed rare in both curricula. In an Israeli Ultra-Orthodox textbook one can find a piece describing Israel's position among the Arab states like that of a little sheep surrounded by seventy wolves (*A Country and its Inhabitants: Studies of the Land of Israel*, Grade 4, Part 3 (2008) p. 119) and a piece in a PA Ministry of Education book that reads: "How come that snakes invade us" (*Arabic Language – Linguistic Sciences*, Grade 12 (2007) p. 61). The first item was included in the study's source material (Israeli quote No. 447) and the second was left out (No. 13 on the above-given list of omitted items).

As for demonizing cases, they too are rare in Israeli schoolbooks and most of these appear in Ultra-Orthodox ones. More demonizing references are found in books issued by the PA Ministry of Education, though they are fewer in number and milder than the ones existing in schoolbooks of other Arab nations such as Syria, Saudi Arabia and even Egypt.¹¹ However, their most significant examples were not included in the source material (Nos. 11-16 on the above-mentioned list). Books issued by the PA Ministry of the Endowments and Religious Affairs, on the other hand, much resemble non-Palestinian Arab schoolbooks in terms of Jews demonization, of which the most revealing manifestations were kept away as well of the source material (Nos. 17-21 on the list).

But explicit demonization is just part of the picture. One should be aware as well of the disturbing phenomenon of implicit demonization: the PA Ministry of Education's books contain repeating negative references to Israel in various capacities (occupier, oppressor, children killer, torturer, aggressor, destructor, desecrator of Muslim and Christian holy places, robber of Palestinian land and water, violator of human rights,

¹¹ That is partly so due to the fact that the PA Ministry of Education's schoolbook publication project was financed by foreign donors. When one of the books (*History of the Modern and Contemporary World*, Grade 10 (2004) p. 63) presented the Protocols of the Elders of Zion as the confidential resolutions of the first Zionist Congress, one of these donors – the Belgian government – intervened and the PA had to issue another version of the book without that reference. The author of this paper, who also authored CMIP's report on the PA schoolbooks of that grade in June 2005, was asked by the Belgian embassy in Tel Aviv to fax them the Arabic text accompanied by an English translation.

crippler of Palestinian economy, polluter of Palestinian environment, source of negative social phenomena among the Palestinians such as drug abuse, etc. – a list of over 30 accusations spread all over the PA curriculum). If such a heavily negative portrayal of the rival "other" is not balanced by other information that would present it as a society of ordinary human beings – and it is not – one then faces implicit demonization. This particular aspect of demonization is not dealt with in the study due, probably, to its relatively narrow definition of this term.

Israeli books, on the other hand, do provide some objective material that presents the Palestinian "other" positively alongside its negative description as enemy. There are stories in Israeli State readers presenting Arab individuals who saved Jews in distress (Israeli quotes Nos. 14, 273), as well as cases of friendship between Arab and Jewish individuals – including children (No. 18). Even the Palestinians' struggle against the Jews and Israel is sometimes shown as one between two national movements equal in status (No. 184). Thus, chances for implicit demonization in Israeli books are greatly diminished.

Unfortunately, the study seems to have failed to pinpoint this important difference between the two curricula.

Finding 2

The first part of this finding, that both parties present exclusive unilateral national narratives that present a wealth of information about the "other" as enemy, fairly reflects reality.

The second part of this finding, on the other hand, does not correspond with the evidence presented by the schoolbooks. The PA books, for their part, contain no references to Israel in positive or human light whatsoever. There are few neutral references to Jews, among other negative ones, and also a single positive reference in the whole Palestinian curriculum, but not in the context of the conflict.¹²

By contrast, Israeli State schoolbooks do provide the student with adequate information about Arab history and culture, including translated stories by Arab writers.¹³ It should be noted in this context that the Arabic language itself is part of the curriculum in many Israeli Jewish schools (and see the comparison made in the study report between Israeli and Palestinian schools in this respect – p. 7). Adequate information is given as well about the religion of Islam – its origins, history and basic tenets (Israeli quotes Nos. 22, 275, 401), as well as issues such as pluralism in Islam (No. 327), human dignity in Islam (No. 329), Islam's traditional tolerant attitude to Jews (No. 196) and more. There is even a specific Hebrew textbook of Koran commentary included in the study but not discussed – *Holy Koran: Verses of the Koran in the Commentator's Eye*, Grades 11+12 (2000). Much information about Arab-Palestinian society inside Israel is given as well, mostly in geography and civic textbooks (not mentioned in the study). Even within the context of the conflict there are cases in which the rival "other" is treated fairly, with its claims and positions

¹² Caliph Al-Ma'mun (9th century) is said to have respected Christian and Jewish scientists – *History of the Arabs and Muslims*, Grade 6 (2000) p. 134 (and in newer editions as well).

¹³ See the piece on the Egyptian Nobel laureate writer Naguib Mahfouz (Israeli quote No. 20). It is followed in the source by his story "Half a Day" translated into Hebrew (not mentioned in the study).

being presented as logical, though contested (No. 26). Also, cases of self-criticism in the context of the conflict are found in Israeli State schoolbooks alone, as seen in the study report.¹⁴ The human aspect of the Palestinian individual in Israeli State schoolbooks has been mentioned already (Finding 1 above). However, Israeli schoolbooks provide meager information about Palestinian society in the West Bank (see footnote 2 in the Introduction of this paper), and the inclusion of more such information in the books should be one of the study's recommendations.

In light of the above, it would be misleading, in my opinion, to present both curricula as even, as far as Finding 2 of the conclusions is concerned.

The wording of Finding 2 also reveals another aspect in the study that is worth attention – the focus on the issue of "national narrative", which is also expressed in both the study's title and the extensive academic discussion of this issue within the study itself (pages 47-49).

The study's emphasis on "narrative" is erroneous, in my opinion. Important as it may be in academic research, a narrative-based analysis does not belong in this kind of study dedicated to empirical scrutiny of expressed attitudes to the rival "other" within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By making the national narrative issue the core of this study the researchers seem to have deviated from their original mission of accurately presenting the relevant material in the books and adopted, instead, a theorized paradigm that distorted the real picture.

Under this paradigm much emphasis is put on the narrative as an indivisible whole, at the expense of discussing important features thereof, such as the utilization within the Palestinian narrative of the traditional Islamic ideals of Jihad and martyrdom in the framework of the perceived solution to the conflict. When questioned regarding the omission of a certain item containing these ideals from the source material the researchers answered that "this is a fairly typical quote in the [Palestinian] national narrative..."¹⁵ which means, probably, that it does not deserve further attention. Indeed, Jihad and martyrdom are not discussed in the study at all but rather registered as "values".

Ignoring a narrative's aspects that may have a negative impact on the chances of solving the conflict peacefully means that the coverage of the schoolbook contents is lacking. Narratives should be carefully examined in light of international standards of peace education and any failure on their part to comply with such standards should be singled out. That was not done, unfortunately. Put in harsher words, "Narrative" seems to have served in this case as a refuge from the need to check things thoroughly, much the same as "Holy Scriptures" in the other cases mentioned above.

Treating narratives as "holy" also prevented analysis and judgment of items therein that are clearly false, like the one in a PA textbook that accuses Israel of stealing Lebanese water (p. 21 in the report). A study of schoolbook material should include a "lie-detecting mechanism" which is not to be found in narrative-based analyses.

¹⁴ On pages 2, 30-31 of the report. A single case of (actually pseudo-)self-criticism in a Palestinian textbook is cited in the report on p. 31.

¹⁵ Item No. 7 within their e-mail response sent by Prof. Bruce Wexler to all persons involved in the study on January 31, 2013.

In short, not only is a narrative-oriented approach of little help in fully understanding what is in the books. It also hinders true investigation. The improved version of the study should, therefore, stick to pure scrutiny of the schoolbook material without any theoretical glossing over. The quotes speak for themselves quite decidedly – as one can clearly realize in light of the discussion so far.

Finding 3

This is a statement, not a finding, since it is not based on actual study of the source material, as already explained in the discussion of the delegitimization issue (in the Categorization section above). The source material itself presents a different picture altogether clearly showing that the PA schoolbooks delegitimize the presence of the Jewish/Israeli "other" both explicitly and implicitly while the Israeli State books legitimize the presence of the Palestinian-Arab "other" (see the relevant Israeli quotes referred to within the discussion of Finding 2 above and – for explicit delegitimization in PA books of various aspects of the presence of the Jewish/Israeli "other" in the country – Nos. 1-10, 23 on the list of the omitted PA items). One cannot but regard this statement as another effort to create an impression of evenness between the curricula of the two parties.

A central issue in this respect is the study's treatment of the maps that appear in schoolbooks of the two parties. The main claim is that most maps on both sides do not show any border between pre-1967 Israel and the territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Other maps differentiate between the two areas along the 1967 lines and a still smaller number shows the Oslo Accord demarcation lines of areas A, B and C the control of which is divided between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. But none of the maps in Israeli schoolbooks label any territory as "Palestine/Palestinian Authority" while there are three maps in PA books that identify Israel's pre-1967 territory as such (see the discussion on pp. 42-43, 49 of the study report). In other words, the study implies here that the PA books express a more open attitude to Israel than Israel's attitude to Palestine (3 cases against none).

The problem with this equation is that Palestine still does not exist as a sovereign state, while Israel does. Hence, it would be absurd to demand that Israeli schoolbooks officially recognize a non-existing entity, while a parallel demand directed at the PA is palpably in order. Even the existing and recognized Palestinian Authority is not yet a sovereign state that should be labeled accordingly. Besides, labeling its small and scattered territories (areas A and B as specified in the Oslo Accords) is hardly feasible.

Instead of that misleading equation, the study should have focused on whether maps of the two parties represent the actual situation on the ground. That would have yielded a very different result, namely, that Israeli schoolbooks do and the Palestinian ones do not.

The maps appearing in Israeli schoolbooks that present the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as part of Israel – with or without the contoured Palestinian Authority's A and/or B areas – do so because Israel is still considered internationally the occupying power there. The Israeli maps that present these territories as separate from Israel – do so because Israel has not annexed these territories (except for East Jerusalem). These

seemingly contradicting presentations are both compatible with the current political situation. As long as an independent and sovereign Palestinian state is not established no one could demand that maps in Israeli schoolbooks look differently, and their practices of representation should not be regarded as delegitimization, as done in the study report.

That is not the case concerning maps in the PA schoolbooks, because Israel is an independent and sovereign state recognized internationally and also by the PA itself. It would be therefore quite appropriate if all Palestinian maps labeled Israel's pre-1967 territory accordingly. So long as they fail to do so, they delegitimize the existence of the State of Israel.

Apart from the above-discussed Findings 1, 2 and 3, there were several cases of misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the source material that required attention. Two of them will be discussed here. First, it is claimed in the report (p. 43) that "use of the labels Yehuda and Shomron [the Hebrew versions of Judea and Samaria] potentially adds further to the sense that these are or should be part of Israel." This assertion is wrong.

Judea and Samaria are the traditional Hebrew names of the regions also known as the West Bank. Both Judea and Samaria and the West Bank are in use in Israeli communication media and both appear in schoolbooks, although the general tendency there is to prefer the Hebrew appellation, especially in light of the fact that the terms Judea and Samaria have been widely used for centuries internationally,¹⁶ while the West Bank is a relatively new Jordanian political term that is no longer valid.¹⁷

Whatever the reason for the use in Israeli textbooks of the names Judea and Samaria rather than the West Bank, and whatever the sentiments involved, it has no significant impact on any possible settlement. Even after the establishment of an independent Palestinian state these regions will still be referred to in Israel by their ancient names, much the same as the case of the Gilead region in Jordan, for example. Therefore, the emphasis put in the study on this issue is far beyond any real necessity.

The second issue raises some concern. Among the values registered in the study one finds "martyrdom-sacrifice through death" on both sides (p. 38). The quotes taken from the schoolbooks of both parties and given as examples (pp. 40-42) describe self-sacrifice for one's country, rather than the commonly perceived martyrdom as an act inspired by religious devotion to God. It is not that quotes of religious martyrdom do not exist in the Palestinian source material gathered for the study. They do. Palestinian quote No. 118, for instance, speaks of "the desire for seeking martyrdom in God's cause" (*Al-raghbah fi al-istish'had fi sabil Allah*) and quote No. 480 mentions that "a Muslim loves martyrdom" (*Al-Muslim yuhibbu al-shahadah*). But none of these is brought forth as evidence, which leaves the impression that the study tried to blur the specific connotation of Islamic martyrdom by drawing a parallel

¹⁶ They both appear in the New Testament; and Samaria was the official name of one of the districts under the British Mandate. Both have historical Arabic versions – *Yahudha* and *Al-Samirah*.

¹⁷ Jordan invented that term after its annexation of parts of Mandatory Palestine west of the River Jordan following the 1948 war. Together with its matching co-term "the East Bank" it was used to signal the territorial integrity of the Kingdom. But Jordan declared in 1988 its disengagement from that region, which has made the term politically obsolete ever since.

between it and the secular nationalist-patriotic notion of "self-sacrifice through death". What strengthens this impression is the fact that the concept of religiously-inspired martyrdom is never discussed in the study, contrary to former studies that dealt with the PA curriculum.

To be sure, martyrdom and sacrifice-through-death are not synonyms. It is natural for two nations involved in a conflict with each other to promote the concept of self-sacrifice in defense of one's national interests. But when one of these parties portrays such self-sacrifice as a religious obligation to God it introduces a new and dangerous element into the conflict and transforms it from a national struggle into a religious crusade. It is therefore extremely important that such expressions of religious belligerency be identified and given proper attention. The present study has neglected this issue. Fixing this shortcoming is another pre-condition on the way to its improvement.

Not all references to martyrdom in the books have this alarming potential. References to past cases of martyrdom as a cherished heritage do no harm. It is only the direct connection made between the concept of martyrdom (and Jihad) and the perceived solution of the present conflict that should sound the alarm.

Probably in line with the overall endeavor to play down the Jihad and martyrdom issue in the PA schoolbook, the term *Fidai* that appeared in a poem there was given a special treatment. This term, of which the meaning is "a warrior ready to sacrifice his life", was traditionally connected to Jihad and it nowadays refers usually to members of the Palestinian armed organizations. This Arabic term was translated in the study into both English and Hebrew as "my redemption". It is true that the word *fidai* also means "my redemption", but in that meaning it does not fit in with the poem verses, especially with the one saying: "I will live as my redemption, I will remain as my redemption, I will spend my redemption..." which was rendered in this case into "I will live as a redemption, I will remain a redeemer, I will spend my redemption..." (Palestinian quote No. 6). The verse should actually read: "I will live as a *Fidai*, I will remain a *Fidai*, I will die as a *Fidai*..." – in the sense mentioned above.

There is another issue that should be accorded attention in this context. Pursuant to its methodology of non-analysis of the individual quotes, the study refrained, among other things, from connecting two or more pieces together which would reveal more complex messages. That is probably why the recurrent mention in PA schoolbooks of the need to liberate Palestine was kept apart from the similarly recurring theme there that Israel within its pre-1967 borders is "occupied Palestine". This way, the study has avoided the problematic conclusion reached at in former studies, namely, that full liberation of Palestine in the PA schoolbooks actually meant the liquidation of the State of Israel. It is hoped that the changing of this methodological practice in the improved study will put an end to such phenomena.

Conclusion

In many terms, this study constitutes a turning point in the field of schoolbook research, at least, as far as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is concerned: it covered a substantial number of both Palestinian and Israeli books that were studied by a joint team of Palestinian and Israeli researchers and research assistants; it developed an innovative method of data input which assured maximum objectivity on the part of

the data collectors; it also developed a computerized analysis mechanism that created statistically measurable results; it introduced – for the first time in Middle Eastern schoolbook research – the quantitative method of analysis. In short, this is a pioneer project of its kind and all persons involved should be highly appreciated.

However, like many pioneer projects in other times and places, this one too is not immune to some shortcomings. The two main ones, as I have shown in the paper, are:

1. The study's exclusive reliance on the quantitative methodology of item rating and counting. No attempt was made to further analyze the rich source material in order to bring forth far more exhaustive results and create an adequately representative picture of the actual characteristics of the two curricula.
2. The study's blurring of the evident differences between the attitudes of the two curricula to the rival "other" and to the possibility of a peaceful solution to the conflict. These differences are apparent in the source material gathered for the purpose of this study – even without the omitted references. Unfortunately, instead of directly drawing from the source material, the course chosen for the study was narrative-oriented with its accompanying "politically correct" touch.

These are major issues that should be solved as a pre-condition to the study's improvement. In addition, as inferred from the analysis presented above, the improved study should be based on the following principles:

- All relevant data should be included in the source material. No relevant pieces should be excluded under pretexts that they are "not explicit enough" or "scriptural" or "repeating themselves". No textbook containing relevant data should be randomly or non-randomly excluded.
- All conflict-related themes represented in the books should be attended to in the study (a preferable yardstick might be UNESCO's declarations and resolutions regarding peace education). The categories should fully correspond with all these themes and include a wide range of study queries.
- All themes, categories and terms should be distinctly defined and clearly differentiated from one another.
- Each piece should be examined with a view to determining its significance in the context of the conflict compared to other, similar ones.
- Different pieces with complementary messages should be put together in order to create a general picture.
- Implicit messages, nuances of expression as well as cases of omitted information, or sheer misinformation, should be given attention and recorded.
- Holy Scriptures quoted in the schoolbooks are not to be examined, except in cases where they are utilized for purposes related to themes included in the study.
- The study should be exclusively based on the source material, with no resort to external theories or explanations (e.g., the "narrative" theory, the "occupation" reasoning, etc.) that might distort the real picture presented by the textbooks.
- Finally, the study's conclusions should strictly follow the findings, without any attempt to "balance" them with a view to creating false evenness between the parties.

Once the study is reconstructed along these lines, it might become the ultimate research project ever done on the Israeli and Palestinian conflicting curricula. As such, its recommendations will be focused and solidly based and, consequently, far more effective than the ones listed in the present report (p. 52). That would best contribute to the realization of the highly perceived ideal stated in the CRIHL's rationale of "promoting development of a culture of peace and mutual respect in the Holy Land" (p. 1).