EMOTIONS IN CONFLICT
INHIBITORS AND FACILITATORS OF PEACE MAKING

Eran Halperin

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY
“This book provides a detailed, nuanced, and novel perspective on the role of emotions in intergroup conflict and conflict resolution. Drawing on Halperin’s own extensive work in this area and integrating it with other relevant research, this book has the potential to quickly become a classic in the field.”
—Johanna Ray Vollhardt, Clark University, USA

“Although many books have been written about violent conflicts, relatively few focus on the important factor that is also responsible for their eruption, escalation and resolution—namely human emotions. This book is a pivotal contribution in closing this lacuna. He originally, eloquently, and comprehensively tackles the issue of emotions in conflict by providing a holistic analysis that not only elaborates on the role of specific emotions, but also and especially provides a holistic conceptual framework of emotions’ functioning in the challenging context of intergroup violence.”
—Daniel Bar-Tal, Tel Aviv University, Israel
Social and political psychologists have attempted to reveal the reasons why individuals and societies that acknowledge that peace would improve their personal and collective well-being, and are aware of the required actions needed to promote it, are simply incapable of making this step forward. Some social psychologists have advocated the idea that certain societal beliefs and collective memories about the nature of the opponent, the in-group, the history, and the current state of the conflict distort the perceptions of society members and prevent them from identifying opportunities for peace. But these cognitive barriers capture only part of the picture.

Could identifying the role of discrete emotions in conflicts and conflict resolution potentially provide a wide platform for developing pinpoint conflict resolution interventions?

Using a vast array of primary sources, critical literature analysis, and firsthand personal experiences in various conflict zones (Middle East, Cyprus, Bosnia, and Northern Ireland), Eran Halperin introduces a new perspective on psychological barriers to peace. Halperin focuses on various emotional mechanisms that hamper peace processes, even when parties face real opportunities for conflict resolution. More specifically, he explores how hatred, anger, fear, angst, hope, despair, empathy, guilt, and shame, combined with various emotion regulation strategies, provide emotions-based explanations for people’s attitudinal and behavioral reactions to peace-related events during the ongoing process of conflict resolution.

Written in a clear and accessible style, *Emotions in Conflict* offers a thought-provoking and pioneering insight into the role discrete intergroup emotions play in impeding, as well as facilitating, peace processes in intractable conflicts. This book is essential reading for those who study intractable conflicts and their resolutions, and those who are interested in the ‘real-world’ implication of recent theories and findings on emotion and emotion regulation.

**Eran Halperin** is currently an associate professor and the active dean of the School of Psychology at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel. His research uses psychological and political theories and methods to investigate different aspects of intergroup conflicts. More specifically, he is interested in widening our understanding on the emotional roots of some of the most destructive political ramifications of intergroup relations.
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EMOTIONS IN CONFLICT

Inhibitors and Facilitators of Peace Making

Eran Halperin
To Tal, my beloved wife, the source of my emotions and the resolution to my conflicts
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As someone who lived his entire life in the context of violent conflict, this book is an encapsulation of what I see as the hidden story of the people living in such contexts. Thinking back on my own life experiences and the ones of my friends and family members, they can very easily be described as a roller coaster of intense conflict-related emotions. Feelings of intense fear, repeated anger, and, at times, even guilt and shame are blended with acute experiences of sadness, sorrow, and empathy. Long-term despair about the possibility of resolving the conflict is jolted from time to time with transient waves of hope for a better future, which quickly disappears after another failed attempt to reach an agreement. I call this story a hidden story because of its (often too) limited presence on public discourse as well as on the agenda of researchers in the field. People rarely talk about their political or conflict-related emotions, and researchers (or at least empirical scholars) of conflicts do not study them in a way that does justice to their actual role within conflict dynamics. My goal in this book, and more broadly in my research in the recent decade or so, is to bring conflict-related emotions to the center of public and academic discourse of intractable conflict. Even more importantly, I aim to demonstrate how such change in perspectives can contribute to promoting conflict resolution, even when dealing with some of the most violent and destructive conflicts worldwide.

Many people, all of whom share the same goals and values mentioned above, took part in that endeavor. Although I am formally the single author of this book, it is in fact a summary of amazing teamwork, which I was fortunate to lead in the last decade or so. I see my collaborative work with my students, friends, and colleagues as the biggest privilege of our profession, and this book, which is composed of studies conducted with more than 40 collaborators, reflects this
approach. These successful collaborations enabled me to perform a relatively intense research program, which occurred in various places around the world and in a relatively short period of time. But more importantly, it dramatically enriched my thinking on these important issues and provided me with the opportunity to get to know some true friends who have accompanied me for many years. Unfortunately, the scope here is too limited to thank them all, but I would like to first thank my first four students, with whom I practically created my first research lab at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya: Smadar Cohen–Chen, Roni Porat, Ruthie Pliskin, and Amit Goldenberg. Most of the ideas appearing in this book grew in that small room in which we held our lab meetings in the first year. I thank each and every one of them for the opportunities I had to share time and thoughts with them, and for being beside me in the best years of my career. I would also like to express my deep gratitude and admiration to my two mentors: Daniel Bar–Tal and James Gross. I learned so many things from both of them, and the biggest challenge of my work is to bring together the two very different approaches of these two academic giants into one coherent line of thought. I hope this book will rise to their very high standards. Special thanks are extended to my two closest friends and collaborators, Maya Tamir and Tamar Saguy, who taught me most of what I know about emotions (Maya) and intergroup relations (Tamar), but mostly have taught me about real friendship and camaraderie. As I mentioned, I was fortunate to work with a relatively large group of brilliant friends and students on studies referred to in this book, and I would like to express my deep gratitude to some of them (and send apologies to the others I could not mention) here: Siwar Aslih, Daphna Canetti, Richard Crisp, Sabina Čehajić, Carol Dweck, Julia Elad–Strenger, Chris Federico, Tamar Gur, Boaz Hameiri, Yossi Hasson, Sivan Hirsch–Hoeffer, John Jost, Saulo Fernández, Aharon Levy, Melissa McDonald, Liat Netzer, Michal Reifen Tagar, Lee Ross, Noa Schori–Eyal, Nevin Solak, Keren Sharvit, Gal Sheppes, Linda Skitka, Martijn Van–Zomeren, Johanna Ray Vollhardt, Michael Wohl, and Nechumi Yaffe. Finally, special thanks go to Shira Kudish for assisting me with everything that was needed to transform the first drafts created on my computer into reasonable book materials.

Above all, I want to thank my wife, Tal, and my kids, Mika, Neta, and Omer. The support I got from you enabled me to write this book, and the love and warmth filling our home provided the book with what I hope is its unique flavor. Thank you for being there for me. I promise to do anything possible to make sure you will have a peaceful future in our region.
Intractable conflicts are one of the most difficult problems of contemporary human society. They involve mass violence and fundamentally harm the well-being of the involved citizens as well as hindering the potential development of the involved societies in their entirety. Even beyond the immediate costs of sacrificing human lives, in these conflicts individuals feel obligated to sacrifice their personal interests for the sake of the conflict, and societies pay a high price in terms of economy, education, and other social aspects to survive the conflict. Although it is important to remember that conflicts are sometimes necessary to bring about social change, especially when discrimination and injustice are present, most people probably would prefer to rectify these social and moral wrongdoings in peaceful rather than in violent ways. In other words, all other factors held constant, we can assume that most people would prefer living in peace and security over the destructive alternative of being actively involved in long-term, violent conflict. And indeed, research has shown that even societies that have been involved in violent conflicts for decades highly value the concept of peace (albeit in an abstract way) and at least declare that they would do “everything that is needed” to promote it (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2013).

But recent data shows that out of the 352 violent conflicts that have erupted since World War II, only 144 have concluded in peace agreements (Harbom, Hogbladh, & Wallensteen, 2006). This means that the involved societies in most conflict situations worldwide have failed to mobilize their citizens for peace to make the abovementioned transition. For an outsider, this must be seen as very strange. If most people really prefer peace over war and violence, we would expect societies in conflict to spend most of their time, resources, and energy on attempts to promote peace rather than on maintaining or improving their status vis-à-vis
their adversary. But we know that this is not necessarily the situation, and therefore, any objective observer probably would search for that dramatic engine that overrides the wish for peace and maintains long-term conflicts even when the price they extract is so terrible. In a way, this is the million-dollar question put forward by conflict resolution scholars and practitioners—why can’t societies that are involved in long-term conflicts find a balanced and fair solution that will dramatically improve the well-being of their citizens and enable rapid development of various socioeconomic and political objectives?

For many years conflict resolution scholars and practitioners believed that the answer to this question was rather simple. We tend to think that intractable conflicts are over real disagreements, and as such, fundamental ideologies and conflicting goals and interests are the driving forces behind these conflicts. According to that approach, intractable conflicts are so hard to resolve because the real or tangible disagreements at the root of these conflicts cannot be bridged. These disagreements are usually driven and fueled by conflicting ideologies that, at the beginning, help to define the fundamental interests of each side and then also guide the kind of (often aggressive) behavior that is meant to serve these goals and interests. Bar-Tal (2013) has defined this “ideology of conflict” as an ethos, and Ginges, Atran, Medin, and Shikaki (2007) have taken it one step forward by suggesting that, in the context of long-term conflicts, people tend to believe that certain issues or values are sacred, namely, that they cannot be compromised in any situation or for any exchange.

And to some extent this is true. Let us take the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as a prototypical example of an intractable conflict that has lasted for more than two generations. This conflict is by all means based on real disagreements over real issues, such as the questions of the territory, settlements, the future of Jerusalem, and the future of the Palestinian refugees. The conflict over these real disagreements is driven by conflicting ideologies held by two national movements—the Jewish Zionist and the Palestinian national movements. Accordingly, those who strongly adhere to the Zionist or Palestinian ethos of the conflict see the above-mentioned issues as sacred and will probably immediately reject any offer for a peace agreement that inherently includes compromise on what they perceive as sacred values.

But, surprisingly, when one looks more deeply into the current state of affairs within that conflict (and many other long-term conflicts), it is quite clear that although core disagreements and conflicting ideologies still exist, they do not constitute the main obstacles for peace. Public opinion polls from the last decade show vast support among both Israelis and Palestinians for compromises based on previous US-mediated negotiations and peace proposals (e.g., “the Clinton parameters”). For example, in recent poll we have conducted, 65 percent of Palestinians and a similar proportion of Israelis expressed support for peace based on such well-known compromises. These numbers are consistent with the ones
revealed in many other polls conducted in the region in the last two decades. As in many other conflicts, such support is conditioned by the premise that an agreement based on these compromises will bring about an end to the historical conflict and a minimization of violence. In other words, at least in the case of that prolonged conflict (and many others), both parties are aware of the costs of ending the conflict, and the large majority among both populations is willing to pay the required price to achieve peace. Accordingly, even if disagreements over real issues still exist, they can no longer be attributed as the core reason for the continuation and at times even for the escalation of the conflict.

Again taking the perspective of a naïve, objective observer, the immediate question raised is why these people can’t make this move or walk this dramatic extra mile, which immediately would improve their lives? If these people and their leaders are aware of the kind of concessions that can bring about peace, and if they are actually willing to make these required concessions to promote peace, why do they keep on fighting and killing each other for such long time?

According to the approach to be promoted in the current book, the answer to that crucial question is rooted in the boundary conditions that were described previously. People in many conflicts, even in the most violent and destructive ones, are willing to make ideological concessions over the real issues, but they lack the faith that such concessions would actually lead to the end of the conflict and the minimization of the violence. They do not have such faith because they do not trust their adversary, because they do not believe the adversary can change its immoral and aggressive behavior, because they are afraid that such concessions will put them in a position of high risk and threat, and also because they do not want their concessions to be perceived as an ultimate confession of responsibility for all past (immoral) events of the conflict.

These processes, which I see as the ultimate barriers to peace making and conflict resolution, are best described as emotional phenomena or emotional processes (Frijda, 1986). I see them as emotional phenomena because they encapsulate the core beliefs and appraisals of societies in conflict together with the core political motivations that are implied by these appraisals. When these appraisals and motivations are accompanied by strong affective experiences, which are typical to violent conflicts, they create extremely negative emotions that have a destructive influence on the probability to promote peace.

In more detail, according to Appraisal Theories of Emotions (e.g., Lazarus, 1982; Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984) each belief mentioned above reflects a core appraisal theme of a dominant negative emotion. For example, when people believe that the outgroup poses a fundamental threat to their existence and that a peace agreement will not enable them to defend their group vis-à-vis that threat, they actually feel fear (Bar-Tal, 2001; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Halperin, Bar-Tal, Nets-Zehngut, & Drori, 2008). Hatred toward the outgroup is associated with the belief that the outgroup is evil by nature and will never change
its immoral or violent behavior (Halperin, 2008; Sternberg, 2003). Anger, on the other hand, is driven by an appraisal of the outgroup’s actions as unfair and unjust (Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Mackie & Smith, 2000).

But even more importantly, each of these emotions leads to a concrete motivation that constitutes a building block of the general narrative that structures the opposition to peace. To use the same examples described in the appraisals part, when people feel fear they are motivated to avoid political (and other) risks, making them averse to new ideas or initiatives for peace, which inherently include some flavor of risk. For those who are dominated by hatred, there is no real good reason to support negotiations, gestures, or compromises because they do not really believe that such political moves can bring about a meaningful change in the outgroup’s destructive behavior or its intentions. Finally, anger sometimes can motivate people to respond aggressively even to seemingly constructive cues coming from the outgroup.

Having said that, we must not forget that many times, negative emotions constitute an accurate and correctly adjusted reaction to the outgroup’s immoral actions, provocative statements, and aggressive tendencies. In these cases negative emotions, such as fear, anger, and in extreme cases even hatred, are functional because they prepare group members to cope with difficult, conflict-related events. For example, fear is known as a highly functional emotion that helps individuals and groups to take the necessary measures to defend themselves in the face of external threat. Societies dominated by a high sense of security, also termed optimistic overconfidence (Neale & Bazerman, 1991; Kahneman & Tversky, 1996), like the American society prior to the 9/11 terror attack or the Israeli society prior to the Yom Kippur war, may underestimate potential threats and be caught unprepared. So emotions can be functional sometimes . . .

On the other hand, oftentimes, emotions are not functional and are even counterproductive. As such, they have the potential of playing a central role as psychological barriers to conflict resolution. Outside the context of intractable conflicts, several decades of research point to discrete negative emotions as having a destructive influence in interpersonal conflict resolution and negotiation (for a review see Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010). In the recent two decades, side by side with the study of other psychological barriers to conflict resolution (e.g., Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011; Maoz, Ward, Katz, & Ross, 2002; Mnookin & Ross 1995; Ross & Ward, 1995), scholars have begun to investigate the impact of emotions on public opinion and public behavior in intractable conflicts. Their findings suggest that emotions play a causal role by forming attitudes, biasing attention and action, and shaping reactions to conflict-related events. Some of these studies even show that the effects of emotions on aggressive and conciliatory political attitudes are evident above and beyond other prominent factors, such as ideology and socioeconomic conditions (e.g., Halperin, Russell, Dweck, & Gross, 2011; Spanovic, Lickel, Denson, & Petrovic, 2010).
But what exactly are the destructive effects of negative emotions on conflict resolution and peace making? Research suggests that negative emotions lead to the rejection of positive information about the opponent (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Porat, & Bar-Tal, 2014) and lead individuals to oppose renewal of negotiations, compromise, and reconciliation (e.g., Halperin, 2011b; Sabucedo, Durán, Alzate, & Rodríguez, 2011). Other studies have suggested that emotions like fear and collective angst may result in higher sensitivity to outgroup threats, more right-wing inclinations (Hirschberger & Pyszczynski, 2010), as well as strengthening ingroup ties (Wohl, Branscombe, & Reysen, 2011) and promoting risk-aversive political tendencies (Sabucedo et al., 2011). Research also has shown that negative emotions, mainly anger and hatred, increase support for extreme aggression and military actions aimed at harming or even at eliminating the opponent (Halperin, 2008, 2011b). Furthermore, although recent studies show that anger can sometimes promote conflict resolution (e.g., Halperin, 2011b; Halperin, Russell, Dweck, & Gross, 2011; Reifen Tagar, Frederico, & Halperin, 2011), in most cases anger leads to the appraisal of future military attacks as less risky and more likely to have positive consequences (Lerner & Keltner, 2001).

Even more recently, scholars have begun to examine the role positive emotions play in conflicts. Hope, for example, has been found to play a constructive role in reducing hostility, increasing problem solving in negotiations, and promoting support for conciliatory policies (Carnevale & Isen, 1986; Cohen-Chen, Crisp, & Halperin, 2015a; Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, & Gross, 2014). Furthermore, several studies conducted in the post-conflict settings of Northern Ireland (Moeschberger, Dixon, Niens, & Cairns, 2005) and Bosnia (Čehajić, Brown, & Castano, 2008) reveal a positive relationship between empathy and willingness to forgive opponents for past wrongdoings.

**Why Have We Only Recently Started Studying Emotions in Conflicts?**

But if emotions are such powerful engines of human behavior and of conflict behavior more specifically, why have we only recently started studying emotions in the context of intractable conflicts? Interestingly enough, although the central role played by emotions in conflict has long been recognized by many of the scholars who study ethnic conflicts and conflict resolution (e.g., Bar-Tal, Halperin, & De Rivera, 2007; Horowitz, 1985; Lindner, 2006a; Petersen, 2002; Staub, 2005; Volkan, 1997), empirical investigations into the nature, role, and implications of emotions in long-term conflicts were quite rare until the last two decades. How can this dissonance between consensual acknowledgment and scarcity of empirical research be explained?

I would argue that the answer to this question is rooted in the fundamental nature of human beings, in the nature and development of some academic
Introduction
disciplines, and in the problematic relationships (or lack of them) between different disciplines. Starting with the nature of human beings, it would be fair to assume that most people (lay citizens, leaders, and scholars alike) do not want to believe that emotions are driving them to hurt themselves and others. Just think of a leader who sends people to war knowing that many of them will not return to their families and loved ones. Such a leader must be totally convinced that she had no other alternative but making that difficult decision, that the decision was driven by ideological and maybe even existential considerations, and that the decision-making process was clean, normative, and unbiased. These parameters can help the leader to optimally rationalize and justify the dramatic decision of going to war. Yet the fundamental idea that emotions play some role in driving such decisions challenges all these parameters. Accordingly, people prefer to avoid the emotional aspects while focusing on the more rational or ideological considerations because it helps them preserve their positive self-image even when engaging in one of the most difficult actions—violent conflict.

That idea speaks nicely to the concept of naïve realism (Ross & Ward, 1996). This bias denotes a human tendency to believe that: (a) the individual sees events in objective reality and holds social attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and priorities that stem from a relatively dispassionate, unbiased, and essentially ‘unmediated’ apprehension of the information or evidence at hand; (b) other rational social perceivers will generally share her reactions, behaviors, and opinions—provided that they have had access to the same information and that they too have processed that information in a reasonably thoughtful and open-minded fashion; and (c) the failure of a given individual or group in question to share her views arises not from rationally held information and beliefs but rather from other reasons (Ross & Ward, 1996). Although in their empirical work, Lee Ross, Emily Pronin, and others focused mainly on people’s tendency to believe that cognitive biases do not distort their own decision-making processes (e.g., Pronin, Lin, & Ross, 2002), I think that the same principle can be applied to emotions as well. Accordingly, if most people believe that emotional processes do not intervene in the way they think and act regarding conflicts, it makes sense to focus on other factors when trying to study conflict resolution processes.

The second reason why emotions have only recently been incorporated into the study of intergroup conflicts and their resolution is that developments in the field of conflict resolution have slowly followed the more rapid developments in psychology that have experienced a spectacular growth in the study of emotion (Lewis, Haviland-Jones, & Barrett, 2008). As parts of that so-called emotional revolution, emotional theories have been expanded, a wider set of emotions has been studied, and more accurate and validated measurements have been created (Mauss & Robinson, 2009). In addition to all other obvious advantages of that revolution, it also made the study of emotions more accessible to other disciplines, and today emotions are becoming more and more common
in research disciplines like political science (e.g., Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000), sociology (Scheff, 2003), law (Maroney & Gross, 2014), and philosophy (Griffiths, 2013). But the interdisciplinary boundaries still have remained difficult to cross, and one pivotal challenge on the way toward achieving this goal is to knit together several communities of scholars. I’ll elaborate on this point further in the last chapter of the book.

Finally, another reason why conflict resolution scholars feel reluctant to study the effects of feelings and emotions on the dynamics of political conflicts is because most of them express a rather deterministic view regarding the existence and implications of intense or negative emotions in long-term conflicts. According to this view, intense or negative emotions, such as fear, anger, and contempt, are an inherent part of political conflicts. As such, studying them can promote the understanding of political conflicts, but it can do little to promote their resolution. Given that the conflict resolution field is oriented toward an applied approach aiming at promoting the resolution rather than just the understanding of conflicts, studying emotions can be seen oftentimes as a waste of time.

**Some Basic Assumptions of This Book**

Together with the increasing acknowledgment of the centrality of emotional processes in conflicts and their resolution, various approaches to the study of emotions generally and, more specifically, to the study of emotions in conflicts have emerged. The scope of this book is too limited to present a comprehensive overview and a critical examination of all those different approaches, so in the following paragraphs, I will briefly try to introduce the main assumptions that constitute the building blocks of the way I have been studying emotions in conflicts in recent years.

*First Assumption: Emotions do not operate in a vacuum, and hence, studying emotional processes in intractable conflicts should be different than studying emotions in other domains in life.*

Kurt Lewin (1951) has suggested that human behavior is a function of an environment in which a person operates and that any behavioral analysis must begin with the description of the situation as a whole. This is due to the fact that people’s conception of the context to a large extent determines their behavioral options and eventually their chosen routes of action. In line with this classic notion, I argue that emotions in general, and collective emotions more specifically, do not operate in a vacuum. As such, their generation, nature, and implications are influenced by the specific context in which they appear. This notion is in line with Barrett’s and Mesquita’s work suggesting that a more satisfactory definition of emotion should incorporate the basic fact that emotions are contextually constituted (Barrett,
Rather than defining emotions as features of the mind or—in Klaus Scherer's terms—“synchronized changes in the states of . . . organismic subsystems” (p. 697), these authors suggest that emotions should be placed at the interface between mind and context.

The collective context’s significance lies in the fact that it dictates society members’ needs and goals as well as the challenges they encounter to satisfy them. Therefore, as Halperin and Pliskin (2015) have argued recently, when analyzing the role of collective emotions in intractable conflicts, special attention should be given to the conflict’s unique context and, more specifically, to its psychological implications. The psychological context should be considered in all stages of the emotion generation process and also when studying emotion regulation processes (Halperin & Pliskin, 2015).

The psychological context of intractable conflicts usually is defined by the following characteristics (Bar-Tal, 2007): (a) the conflicts are perceived as being about essential and even existential goals, needs, and/or values; (b) they are perceived as irresolvable; (c) they include an enduring and destructive element of mutual violence; (d) they are perceived as being of a zero sum nature; (e) they occupy a central place in the lives of individual society members and of society as a whole; (f) they demand extensive material (i.e., military, technological, and economic), educational, and psychological investment; and (g) they persist for a long period of time, that is, for at least one generation.

The collective setting of intractable conflict should be seen as one lasting for decades as durability is one of its most important characteristics. Throughout these years, members of societies live under high levels of perceived threat and uncertainty, and many of them even face violence, suffering, and victimization in the most direct and personal ways. Thus, the nature of the lasting context of conflict has relevance to the well-being of society members—it engages them personally as well as occupying a central position in public discourse. It supplies information and experiences that compel society members to construct an adaptable worldview.

Consequently, individuals living in such an environment often are characterized by more competitive worldviews, less cognitive flexibility, more ‘black-and-white’ thinking, and higher sensitivity to various threat cues. These characteristics have wide influence on the kinds of emotions experienced by people, on the magnitude of these emotions, as well as on regulatory processes they utilize to alter or manage these emotional experiences. For example, extreme negative emotions, like hatred, extreme anger, and fear, are more commonly experienced and also seen as more acceptable or legitimate in societies involved in long-term conflicts. Such emotions are perceived as more justified given the horrible events of the conflict, and therefore people feel freer to express them and invest less effort to downregulate them. Oftentimes, the expression of these extreme negative
emotions helps society members to cope with the psychological challenges of the conflict, whereas in other times they help leaders to mobilize public support for war and other aggressive policies (Staub, 2005).

But how exactly does the physical, violent context of intractable conflict affect the type and magnitude of the emotional experience? I believe that it does so through the mediation of the psychological context that is so unique to these types of conflicts (see Bar–Tal & Halperin, 2013). According to that view, to fulfill the dramatic social needs of intractable conflicts, the involved societies develop a functional psychological infrastructure composed of biased, one-sided, and oversimplified collective memories of the conflict, accompanied by a tailored ethos of conflict (Bar–Tal, 2013) and long-term emotional sentiments targeted at the outgroup (Halperin & Gross, 2011). This mechanism fulfills basic psychological needs of forming a meaningful worldview that provides a coherent and organized picture in times of stress, threat, and deprivation (e.g., Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, 1997; Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

Emotional experiences and their behavioral and political consequences should be understood and analyzed as by-products of that unique context. In other words, when a new conflict-related, meaningful event occurs, it will be appraised and emotionally responded to when all prior cognitive and emotional dispositions of the society’s members are taken into account. Accordingly, a mildly threatening cue can be interpreted and experienced as a major threat when one takes into account the ingroup’s past collective victimization, current long-term fears, and the satanic view of the outgroup. A seemingly promising message conveyed by an outgroup leader will be responded to by heightened despair if one takes into account repeated memories of past failed attempts and lack of belief in the malleability of the outgroup (Halperin et al., 2011). Therefore, the physical as well as the psychological context of intractable conflicts must be taken into account if one wishes to seriously study emotions in conflicts.

Second Assumption: Emotions are powerful engines of human behavior, and they are even more powerful in social contexts and may be most powerful in a conflictual social context.

Most people agree that emotions exert a vast influence on people’s attitudes, motivations, and behaviors in almost every domain of life. Some would even argue that emotions are the most powerful engines of human behavior (e.g., Arnold, 1960; Frijda, 1984). Yet in some domains, emotions operate merely peripherally and at times even as negligible psychological forces. In other domains, however, and under specific circumstances, emotions play a pivotal role in producing the screenplay of events and orchestrating the behavior of all involved individuals and groups.

The second assumption of the current book is that this is the case in intractable conflicts. Anyone who has ever experienced, either directly or indirectly, a
conflict such as those ongoing in the Middle East, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Chechnya, or Rwanda knows that these conflicts are fueled by high-magnitude, negative emotions like fear, hatred, despair, and contempt. This has led Donald Horowitz (1985), one of the most prominent researchers of violent conflicts, to claim that “[t]he sheer passion expended in pursuing ethnic conflict calls out for an explanation that does justice to the realm of feelings. . . . A bloody phenomenon cannot be explained by a bloodless theory” (p. 140).

But what makes intractable conflicts such fertile ground for the development and dominancy of emotions? I believe that the answer to this question is rooted in two complementary processes that characterize long-term, intractable conflicts. First, the social nature of these conflicts, and even more importantly the extremely high identification people in these contexts feel to their groups, makes the development of group-based emotions highly probable (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Yzerbyt, Dumont, Wigboldus, & Gordin, 2003). According to intergroup emotions theory (Smith, 1993), the more people identify with a certain group, the more they tend to experience emotions in the name of the group or its members. As such, it is enough for a single group member to be mistreated by an outgroup member for the entire group to simultaneously experience group-based anger. Furthermore, when such anger is experienced simultaneously, its magnitude amplifies, and the individuals’ ability to downregulate it diminishes (Porat, Halperin, Mannheim, & Tamir, in press; Rime, 2009; von Scheve & Ismer, 2013). Accordingly, extreme negative emotions can be felt when personally interacting with individuals involved in these violent conflicts, but they are also very dominant in the general atmosphere of these societies and hence can be found in public discourse, mass media, cultural products (e.g., arts and literature), national ceremonies, and so on (e.g., Bar–Tal, Halperin, & De Rivera, 2007).

But intractable conflict is not just an ordinary intergroup setting with very high identification of the involved societies. It is also an enduring context, characterized by high levels of perceived threat and uncertainty, in which many of the involved human beings also face violence, suffering, and victimization in the most direct and personal ways (e.g., Canetti, Hall, Rapaport, & Wayne, 2013; Hobfoll, Canetti-Nisim, & Johnson, 2006). That personal involvement has immediate psychological ramifications. For example, in one recent study (Chipman, Palmieri, Canetti, Johnson, & Hobfoll, 2011) almost 30 percent of a sample of 1,001 Israeli citizens reported some form of impairment caused by posttraumatic stress, and 18 percent of these respondents met the full criteria for diagnosis with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A second study (Canetti et al., 2010) discovered that the prevalence of PTSD and depression for Palestinian men living in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem was also extremely high, 25.4 percent PTSD/29.9 percent depression, 22.6 percent/27.6 percent, and 16.1 percent/16.1 percent, respectively. For women, the prevalence of PTSD and depression was 23.8 percent/29.0 percent, 23.9 percent/28.9 percent, and
19.7 percent/27.6 percent in each of the respective areas. Altogether, that unique physical and psychological context, saturated by violence and psychological distress, prompts the emotional aspect of human psychology to play a more central role than in other domains in life.

 Third Assumption: We can study decision makers’ and leaders’ emotions and decision-making processes, but it is equally as important to study bottom-up processes, namely, the way the emotions of the masses shape and operate to form leaders’ decision-making processes.

There are different ways to think about conflicts and conflict resolution, and therefore there are also different ways to study emotions in conflicts and conflict resolution processes. Those who believe that intractable conflicts are first and foremost top-down processes focus their research in the way leaders and other policy makers make key decisions about war and peace (e.g., Jervis, 1976; Levy, 1988; Mintz, 2004). In recent years, researchers have started to investigate empirically the role emotions play in what previously was seen as a rational and well-structured decision-making process—leadership decision making (e.g., Renshon & Lermer, 2012).

This literature on emotions and foreign policy decision making has been inspired heavily by a broader line of research on the role of emotions in interpersonal negotiation and conflict resolution (for a review, see Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010). The dominant research paradigm of most researchers in that field has been characterized by a focus on the decision maker’s own positive or negative mood as a predictor of her negotiation decisions and behaviors (e.g., Baron, Fortin, Frei, Hauver, & Shack, 1990; Carnevale & Isen, 1986). More advanced views offer a complementary focus on interpersonal effects (i.e., the effects of one individual’s emotions on the other’s behavior), like, for example, the emotions as social information (EASI) model (Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef & De Dreu, 2010; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004b).

In the current book, I take an approach that is different from the ones described in at least two main aspects. Most importantly, in line with the writing and research of some of the most important scholars who study psychological aspects of intractable conflicts (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2013; Kriesberg, 1993; Staub, 2011), I see intractable conflicts mostly as bottom-up rather than top-down processes. As such, emotions influence the continuation of these conflicts and their (lack of) resolution either by creating an extremely negative emotional climate (e.g., De Rivera & Páez, 2007) and collective emotional orientation (Bar-Tal et al., 2007) or by shaping people’s concrete attitudes and behaviors in response to conflict related events (e.g., Halperin, Russell, Dweck, & Gross, 2011; Maoz & McCauley, 2005; Spanovic, Lickel, Denson, & Petrovic, 2010). According to the bottom-up approach, both the social emotional climate and
the aggregated positions of individuals living in these conflict zones then shape leaders’ decision-making processes and consequently change the course of the conflict.

Interestingly enough, in both these cases emotions shape people’s political attitudes and behaviors, although these people do not directly communicate with adversary group members. When emotions influence leaders’ decision making inside the negotiation room, it is a dynamic, interactive process in which ones actions or emotional expressions lead to another’s emotional reactions, which in turn, bring about another emotional chain reaction. On the other hand, the current approach, which focuses on citizens’ emotional reactions to conflict-related events or messages, sees emotions as an internal rather than an interactive process. In this process, people are exposed to a meaningful conflict-related event or information mainly through the mediation of the mass media or their leaders. When this information is absorbed and appraised, it stimulates a certain emotion that in turn elicits a certain position regarding the desired policy in response to the stimulating information. Although when shared with other society members, these emotions can be amplified; this entire process is inherently internal and does not require interactive communication or face-to-face encounters with outgroup members.

*Fourth Assumption: Each discrete intergroup emotion has a unique nature, appraisals, emotional goals, and action tendencies, and as such, each discrete intergroup emotion leads to concrete political implications regarding conflict and conflict resolution dynamics.*

For many years the dominant approach to studying emotions in general, and emotions in conflicts more specifically, focused on separating emotions by valence, trying to identify the different roles played by positive and negative emotions in explaining human behavior. This approach is still dominant in the conflict resolution field in which most intervention programs still see one of their main goals as reducing negative intergroup emotions like fear and anger and encouraging positive emotional experiences like hope and empathy. The dominant theory on emotions in politics in the political science and political psychology fields, the *Affective Intelligence Theory* (Marcus & MacKuen, 1993), focuses on two main emotional systems (recently expanded to three) but still does not value the need for studying the nature and the political implications of each and every emotion separately.

Contrary to the abovementioned approach, I argue that this emphasis on positive versus negative valence or on diffuse mood states blurs our understanding of the multifaceted role of emotion in shaping people’s attitudes and behaviors in conflict situations. According to the discrete emotions approach, each discrete emotion has its own antecedents, appraisal components, relational themes, and
action tendencies (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989; Lazarus, 1991; Manstead & Tetlock, 1989; Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994; Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993). Emotions therefore provide more differentiated information and carry more clear-cut behavioral implications than moods (Weiner, 1986). As James Averill (1984) has maintained, each emotional experience represents a unique story that guides and then justifies people’s reactions to specific events.

Numerous studies conducted in recent years in various contexts of political, intergroup conflicts suggest that the discrete emotions approach should be used as the basic framework for studying emotions in conflicts as well (e.g., Halperin, 2011b; Halperin, Russell, Dweck, & Gross, 2011; Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007; Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Maoz & McCauley, 2008; Sabucedo et al., 2011; Skitka, Bauman, Aramovich, & Morgan, 2006; Small, Lerner, & Fischhoff, 2006; Spanovic, Lickel, Denson, & Petrovic, 2010). These studies demonstrate how emotions of the same valence (e.g., fear and anger, guilt and shame, and hope and empathy) can have totally different and at times even contradictory implications on people’s attitudes and behaviors in conflict. For example, scholars who have studied Americans’ reactions to the 9/11 terror attacks point toward intergroup anger as one of the major engines leading people to support militant actions in response to the outgroups’ aggressive actions while identifying fear as increasing risk estimates, pessimistic predictions, and support for defensive rather than offensive measures (Cheung-Blunden & Blunden, 2008; Huddy et al., 2007; Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Skitka, Bauman, Aramovich, & Morgan, 2006).

These studies highlight the importance of distinguishing among emotions from the same valence because their political implications may differ substantially. Such distinction is even more important because recent studies show that seemingly negative emotions can be positive or constructive in terms of conflict resolution and vice versa (e.g., Gayer, Landman, Halperin, & Bar-Tal, 2009; Halperin, Russell, Dweck, et al., 2011; Reifen Tager, Federico, & Halperin, 2011; Spanovic et al., 2010). For example, Halperin, Russell, Dweck, et al. (2011) have demonstrated that anger can lead to higher support for compromises in the absence of hatred within the context of an upcoming opportunity for peace. This is mainly due to the fact that anger can induce risk-seeking behavior, optimistic forecasting, and a belief in one’s own capability or that of the ingroup to correct the negative situation (Halperin, 2011b; Halperin, Russell, Dweck, et al., 2011; Reifen Tager et al., 2011). Additionally, similar patterns were found regarding fear and collective angst. Spanovic et al. (2010) have shown that fear of the outgroup was related to increased motivation for aggression within an ongoing conflict but was related negatively to aggression in a conflict that had already been resolved. Halperin, Porat, and Wohl (2013) have pointed to the positive effect of collective angst as leading to more willingness to compromise in intractable conflict. Altogether, these findings highlight the need to go beyond
the valence-based approach and to study the unique role played by discrete emotions in intractable conflicts.

*Fifth Assumption: Emotions can be changed and, in this way, they can also change political processes.*

As mentioned, even when conflict resolution scholars started taking emotions more seriously in their studies, their dominant assumption regarding emotions was rather deterministic. As such, studying them can promote the understanding of political conflicts, but it can do little to promote their resolution. In this book (see Chapter 10), and in our research in recent years (e.g., Cohen–Chen, Halperin, Crisp, et al., 2014; Halperin, Pliskin, Saguy, Liberman, & Gross, 2014; Halperin & Pliskin, 2015; Halperin, Porat, Tamir, & Gross, 2013), we introduce a different approach, suggesting that strategies of emotion regulation, previously used in basic psychology, and mainly in intra- and interpersonal domains, can be used in the context of intergroup conflicts and potentially can constitute a tool to promote resolution of conflicts (Goldenberg, Halperin, Van-Zomeren, & Gross, in press).

This new approach is predicated on the idea that even powerful emotions can be modified. This insight is at the heart of a relatively new field of research in affective science that is concerned with emotion regulation, defined as the processes that influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express these emotions (Gross, 1998, 2014). Because emotions are multi-componential processes that unfold over time, emotion regulation involves changes in the latency, rise time, magnitude, duration, and offset of responses in behavioral, experiential, or physiological domains (Gross & Thompson, 2007). Emotion regulation may increase or decrease the intensity and/or duration of either negative or positive emotions.

Most of the research on emotion regulation to date has focused on individuals or dyads. However, I argue that many of the insights from such research are applicable to the context of intergroup conflicts. Given that effective strategies of emotion regulation (e.g., reappraisal) allow people to appreciate the broader meaning of events (Ray, Wilhelm, & Gross, 2008), leading to a more balanced perspective (Gross, 2002), these techniques have the potential to increase support for conciliatory attitudes by decreasing the negative intergroup emotions associated with conflict-related events and broadening the constricted perspective through which people view the conflict.

All five assumptions are integrated in Chapter 2 of the book, which offers a basic framework to the study of emotional processes in intractable conflicts. The general theoretical framework presented in the second chapter is followed by seven chapters in which the role of discrete intergroup emotions (e.g., hatred, anger, fear, hope, empathy, and pride) or groups of intergroup emotions (e.g., moral emotions) during peace processes are discussed. In each of these chapters, the
fundamental nature of the emotional phenomenon is briefly reviewed, followed by an elaborated description of the emotion’s nature and implications in the intergroup context and more specifically in the context of intractable conflicts. Following this, an extended chapter (Chapter 10) is devoted to various regulation strategies for these emotions, which can potentially contribute to conflict resolution processes. In that sense, the book in its entirety offers a new way of thinking and to some extent also studying emotional processes in intractable conflicts. It identifies the unique role of each intergroup emotion in inhibiting or facilitating public support for peace but also offers ways to change or regulate emotions to promote peace.
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