

Sociopsychological Foundations of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Applying Daniel Bar-Tal's Theorizing

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The theory of the sociopsychological foundations of intractable conflicts, developed by Daniel Bar-Tal (2007b, 2013), refers to the social and psychological processes through which societies involved in intractable conflicts adapt to the difficult conditions of the conflict and to the consequences of this adaptation for the dynamics and continuation of the conflict. The theory was developed, to a large extent, on the basis of research conducted by Bar-Tal, along with his colleagues and students, in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, as will be discussed in detail in what follows, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is considered a prototypical case of an intractable conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007a). It is an intense and violent conflict, which has involved extensive deaths, injuries, destruction of property, displacement, and constant experiences of threat and danger, all of which have caused considerable suffering to the members of the involved societies. Such difficult conditions are bound to have a psychological effect on society members, as well as consequences for macro-level societal processes. Bar-Tal's theorizing and research is concerned with these dynamics. The aim of the present chapter is to present an overview of the theory of the sociopsychological foundations of intractable conflicts and demonstrate how it applies to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The subsequent chapters in this volume then elaborate on the different elements of the theory as observed in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict as an Intractable Conflict

Conflicts between societies and nations are not a unitary phenomenon. They may be classified along a continuum that varies between short-term low-intensity conflicts that involve minimal violence on one end and intense protracted conflicts that involve extensive violence on the other end. Bar-Tal's (2007b, 2013) theorizing is concerned with conflicts that are placed at the negative end of this continuum, of which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one example. The theory begins by delineating the defining characteristics of intractable conflicts, some of which were originally suggested by Kriesberg (1993). Specifically, intractable conflicts are violent and protracted, demand extensive investment, play a central role in the lives of the involved societies, and are perceived by them as total, irresolvable, and having zero-sum nature.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is indeed protracted, with roots dating back to the Jewish immigration and settlement in the territory of Palestine/Land of Israel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Jews and Palestinians have repeatedly clashed over the control of this territory, which both parties consider to be their historic homeland (for detailed historical reviews, see Gelvin, 2005; Gerner, 1991; Morris, 1999; Tessler, 1994). Over the years, the conflict has expanded, involving other regional and international parties and additional issues including religion, culture, and economy. In some periods, it was inseparable from the broader Israeli-Arab conflict that involved Israel's other Arab neighbors (see Podeh, Chap. 7). Importantly, several generations have now been born and raised into the conflict and are not familiar with alternative realities.

The conflict had been violent since its beginning. Although the extent of violence fluctuates, it continually characterizes this conflict. Over the years, the conflict has involved several wars, numerous large-scale military operations, military occupation, violent uprisings, and terror attacks. Engaging in such extensive violence has forced the parties to mobilize all their available resources toward the conflict, as well as to recruit the support of external parties (see e.g., Hever, 2013; Lifshitz, 2000; Swirski, 2005; Tov, 1998).

The conflict is central to the being of the involved societies and leaves its mark not only on the collective lives of the Israeli and Palestinian societies but also on the daily lives of individual society members (Bar-Tal, 2007a). It receives extensive attention in the media and occupies a central place in the public discourse of both societies. Consequently, it affects many of the decisions that are made by leaders, institutions, and individuals. Moreover, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also draws attention from the international community. Many international actors consider this conflict to be a threat to world stability, and numerous states and international organizations have been involved in attempts to resolve it.

As mentioned earlier, there are multiple issues in dispute between Israelis and Palestinians. The conflict concerns issues that are believed to be fundamental and essential to the existence of the parties and central to their national identities, namely, the rights to self-determination, statehood, security, territory, and resources (Bar-Tal, 2007a; Dowty, 2008; Khalidi, 2010). In addition, the conflict involves disputes around religious and cultural issues. Because these issues are seen as existential, they became protected values (Ginges, Atran, Medin, & Shikaki, 2007; Landman, 2010), and the conflict came to be seen as a zero-sum game, in which

neither of the parties was willing to consider compromises. Indeed, attempts to negotiate resolution of the conflict revealed that the Palestinian's minimal demands exceed the Israelis' maximum willingness for concessions and vice versa (Caplan, 2011; Gerner, 1991; Tessler, 1994).

We have seen then that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is characterized by all of the defining features of an intractable conflict as proposed by Bar-Tal (2007b, 2013). Many of the issues in dispute in this conflict are real and tangible. Nonetheless, living under the harsh conditions of the conflict for prolonged periods inevitably affects the psychology of the members of the involved societies. These psychological processes, in turn, influence the positions and behavior of society members and, through them, affect the conduct of whole societies.

As a result of the conflict, members of both societies have been subjected to a variety of negative experiences. In addition to the physical pain of deaths and injuries and tangible losses resulting from destruction of property, displacement, and so on, research indicates that the conflict has been a cause of extensive mental suffering (e.g., Bleich, Gelkopf, & Solomon, 2003; Canetti et al., 2010; de Jong et al., 2001; Johnson et al., 2009; for a review of statistics regarding deaths, injuries, and mental suffering, see Nasie, Chap. 3 and Canetti, Chap. 10). These negative experiences pose considerable challenges, to which societies and their individual members must adapt. Bar-Tal (2007b, 2013) refers to three specific challenges that intractable conflicts pose to the involved societies. The first challenge is satisfying the basic needs that are deprived as a result of the conflict, such as the need for knowing, mastery, safety, positive identity, and others (Burton, 1990; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Staub, 2003). The second challenge is learning to cope with stress, distress, and negative emotions that are caused by the conflict and that accompany society members for extended periods of time. The third and final challenge is to win the conflict or at least not to lose. For this purpose, it is necessary to mobilize society members to take part in the conflict and make sacrifices for the sake of the group. Only when this challenge is met can societies maintain an intense conflict with an opponent over time. Bar-Tal (2007b, 2013) maintains that societies involved in intractable conflict develop a unique sociopsychological infrastructure, which is essential in order to address these challenges. The next section presents an overview of this sociopsychological infrastructure and its manifestations in the Israeli-Palestinian case. The following section discusses the functionality of the sociopsychological infrastructure for meeting the challenges posed by the conflict.

Sociopsychological Infrastructure of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Bar-Tal (2007b, 2013) refers to three interrelated elements that constitute the sociopsychological infrastructure of intractable conflict: collective memory, ethos of conflict, and collective emotional orientation. These elements are discussed elaborately in other chapters of this volume; therefore, in this chapter, they are reviewed only briefly.

The “building blocks” of collective memory and ethos of conflict are societal beliefs, which are defined as cognitions that society members share regarding topics and issues that are of special concern for their society (Bar-Tal, 2000). *Collective memory* is comprised of societal beliefs referring to the history of the conflict, which together form a narrative that describes the beginning of the conflict, its progression, and major events that occurred in its course (Cairns & Roe, 2003; Pennebaker, Paez, & Rim, 2013; Wertsch, 2002). The collective memory does not represent an objective or neutral account of past events. Rather, it is selective and biased in ways that serve societies’ present needs (Liu & Hilton, 2005; Páez & Liu, Chap. 5, volume 1 of this series; Southgate, 2005). Specifically, societies that are involved in intractable conflicts tend to develop narratives that justify their own goals in the conflict, blame the rival group for the outbreak and continuation of the conflict and delegitimize them, and portray the ingroup in a positive manner and as the sole victims of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013).

Research conducted among Israelis and Palestinians indicates that the two societies have indeed developed collective memories with these characteristics. Although referring to similar events, the narratives of the two groups are dramatically different from each other and at times appear to be mirror images (Adwan & Bar-On, 2004; Rotberg, 2006; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). Central points of dispute between the two narratives refer to the sources of the conflict and the events of the 1948 war. Israeli Jews see the Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel as the revival of a nation that has been in exile for thousands of years, which is returning to reclaim the land of its forefathers. The Palestinians, in contrast, see the Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine as an invasion of foreign colonialists, which led to the dispossession of the indigenous population. The Jews see the 1948 war as their “war of independence,” in which they successfully defended their newly established state against the Arab nations who sought to destroy it. The Palestinians refer to the same events as “the catastrophe” (Al-Nakba), in which many Palestinians were expelled from their homes, towns, and villages and became refugees, resulting in the dispersion and disintegration of the Palestinian society (for an elaborate discussion of these narratives, see Nets-Zehngut, Chap. 4 and Nahhas, Chap. 5). In the Israeli society, there has been some movement in recent years toward a more critical narrative of historical events (Nets-Zehngut, Chap. 4), while Palestinians generally continue to adhere to the dominant narrative (Nahhas, Chap. 5).

A second central element of the sociopsychological infrastructure is the *ethos of conflict* (EOC). A societal ethos is a system of shared societal beliefs, which define a given society’s central characteristics and give meaning to its members’ social identity (Bar-Tal, 2000; see also Cohrs, Uluğ, Stahel & Kışlioğlu, Chap. 3 and Jost, Stern & Sterling, Chap. 4, volume 1 of this series). An EOC is an organized worldview that allows society members to comprehend the prolonged context of conflict in which they live and guides their behaviors within this context. The societal beliefs that comprise the EOC are organized around eight themes (Bar-Tal, 1998, 2007b). Beliefs about the *justness of the ingroup’s goals* indicate the goals over which the conflict is fought and their crucial importance. For example, both Israelis and Palestinians believe that the land of Palestine/Israel is their group’s historical homeland, and that they have a right to establish their independent state in it. Beliefs

about *security* refer to the importance of keeping the group secure and the conditions needed to achieve such security. In the Israeli and Palestinian societies, these beliefs often refer to the use of force (military service in the Israeli case and armed struggle in the Palestinian case) as necessary in order to protect the group. Beliefs about *positive collective self-image* attribute positive characteristics, values, and behaviors to the ingroup. For example, both Israelis and Palestinians describe the conduct of their own group's members in the conflict as heroic and courageous. Beliefs about *ingroup victimization* present the ingroup as the victim of unjust harm by the adversary. Israelis, for instance, sometimes portray attacks against them in the context of the conflict as a continuation of the historical persecution of the Jews. On the Palestinian side, great importance is placed on commemorating the Nakba of 1948, and later violent events are portrayed as a continuation of the Nakba. Beliefs that *delegitimize the opponents* deny their humanity and exclude them from those worthy of moral treatment. One manifestation of these beliefs in the Israeli-Palestinian case is the tendency to portray the opponent as an evil ruthless aggressor. Beliefs about *patriotism* encourage loyalty, love, and sacrifice for the ingroup. In both the Israeli and the Palestinian societies, those who sacrificed their life for the sake of the group are glorified as national heroes (and in the Palestinian case as *Shahids*, i.e., martyrs). Beliefs about *unity* refer to the importance of remaining united in the face of the external threat. Finally, beliefs about *peace* refer to peace as the ultimate goal of the society and to society members as peace loving. Though the contents of the Israeli and Palestinian EOC are predictably different, and often seem like mirror images of each other (Oren, Bar-Tal, & David, 2004), the central themes of the EOC as described by Bar-Tal (1998, 2007b) are found in both societies (for extensive reviews of the Israeli ethos, see Oren, Chap. 8, and for the Palestinian ethos, see Shaked, Chap. 9). Despite the different contents of the various themes, research has shown that they all load on a single underlying factor (Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Halperin, & Zafran, 2012).

Extensive research has demonstrated the prevalence of EOC beliefs among both the Israeli and the Palestinian societies. On the Israeli side, frequent expressions of EOC beliefs have been found in adult and children's literature (Ben-Ezer, 1992; Cohen, 1985; Govrin, 1989; Shaked, 1989; Teff-Seker, 2012), drama and films (Gross & Gross, 1991; Shohat, 1989; Urian, 1997), the mass media (Sharvit & Bar-Tal, 2007), school textbooks (Bar-Tal, 1998; Mathias, 2002, 2005; Podeh, 2002; Yogev, 2010), national ceremonies (Arviv-Abramowitz, 2011), leaders' speeches, and public opinion polls (Oren, Chap. 8). However, there are also findings indicating that alternative beliefs began to appear in the Israeli society since the late 1970 and gained prominence especially in the 1990s. These alternative beliefs are observed in cultural products (Bar-Tal, 2007a) and in public opinion polls (Oren, Chap. 8). Nonetheless, the EOC has remained a dominant belief system in the Israeli-Jewish society, and one consequence of this dominance is that among Israeli Jews, contents that are consistent with the EOC come to mind more easily than contents that contradict the EOC, regardless of individuals' personal adherence to the EOC (Sharvit, 2008).

Research regarding the Palestinian EOC has been less extensive, yet evidence exists for the prevalence of the Palestinian EOC in Palestinian school textbooks

(Adwan & Bar-On, 2004; Adwan, Bar-Tal, & Wexler, [in press](#)), in the writings of Palestinian children and adolescents (Nasie & Bar-Tal, 2012; Ricks, 2006; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2006), in leaders' speeches and political publications (Shaked, Chap. 9), and in public opinion polls (Oren et al., 2004; Shaked, Chap. 9).

The final element of the sociopsychological infrastructure of intractable conflict is a *collective emotional orientation*. This concept refers to the characteristic tendency of a society and its members to express particular emotions (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & De Rivera, 2007). According to Bar-Tal (2007b), societies involved in intractable conflicts tend to be dominated by the emotions of fear, anger, and hatred (see also Čehajić-Clancy, Chap. 9 and Jarymowicz, Chap. 10, volume 1 of this series). Research has indeed revealed the prevalence of these emotions and their expressions in the Israeli society (Bar-Tal, 2001; Halperin, 2008; Halperin, Canetti, & Kimhi, 2012; Halperin, Russell, Dweck, & Gross, 2011) and to some extent also in the Palestinian society (Lavi, Canetti, Sharvit, Bar-Tal, & Hobfoll, 2014; Nasie & Bar-Tal, 2012). Research also suggests that these emotions are related to collective memories of the conflict (Halperin, Bar-Tal, Nets-Zehngut, & Drori, 2008; Nahhas, Chap. 5) and that they are related to and may also interact with the EOC (Lavi et al., 2014; Pliskin & Halperin, Chap. 11). Though fear, anger, and hatred have received the most attention in research, other collective emotions may also appear in situations of intractable conflict, including humiliation, pride, and hope (for a review, see Bar-Tal, 2013).

Having reviewed the elements that comprise the sociopsychological infrastructure of intractable conflict, we can now turn to the question of why this particular sociopsychological infrastructure tends to develop under the condition of intractable conflict. As mentioned earlier, Bar-Tal (2007b, 2013) maintains that the sociopsychological infrastructure develops as it does because it is functional for addressing the challenges that intractable conflict poses to the involved societies. The following section reviews the functions of the sociopsychological infrastructure in more detail.

Functions of the Sociopsychological Infrastructure

Bar-Tal (2007b, 2013) lists several functions of the sociopsychological infrastructure. First, the infrastructure illuminates the conflict situation, providing a clear, meaningful, and holistic explanation for why the conflict began and why it continues and cannot be resolved. By doing so, the sociopsychological infrastructure fulfills the fundamental human need to form a coherent, organized, and predictable understanding of the world (Baumeister, 1991; Burton, 1990; Reykowski, 1982), which gains special importance in situations that involve uncertainty and threat, such as situations of conflict. In addition, being able to make sense of and find meaning in difficult situations within an existing worldview has been shown to be important for coping adverse traumatic events (Antonovsky, 1987; Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Larson, 1998; Frankl, 1978; Horowitz, 1986; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Kobasa, 1985; Moos & Schaefer, 1986; Taylor, 1983). Hence, the

sociopsychological infrastructure helps society members address the challenges of fulfilling deprived needs and coping with stress. Supporting this function of the sociopsychological infrastructure, research has demonstrated that the EOC is activated among Israeli Jews in times of distress (Sharvit, 2014). Furthermore, adherence to the EOC attenuates the relationship between exposure to property loss as a result of the conflict and depressive symptoms among both Israelis and Palestinians (Lavi et al., 2014).

An additional function of the sociopsychological infrastructure is to justify and provide legitimacy to negative actions of the ingroup toward the adversary in the context of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007b; 2013; see also Jost et al., Chap. 4, volume 1 of this series). These actions are usually harmful toward humans or property and would be considered severe moral violations under other circumstances. In providing justification for such acts, the sociopsychological infrastructure allows group members to disengage morally (Bandura, 1999), thus avoiding unpleasant experiences of cognitive dissonance and group-based moral emotions such as guilt and shame (Halperin, Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Rosler, & Raviv, 2010; Miron, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2006; Roccas, Klar, & Liviatan, 2006; Sharvit, Brambilla, Babush, & Colucci, 2015). Supporting this function of the sociopsychological infrastructure, a study by Sharvit and Zerachovich (2014) found that Israeli Jews who adhered strongly to the EOC reported experiencing similar low levels of guilt and shame when presented with information about Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, whether that information was framed positively or negatively. In contrast, those who reported low EOC adherence distinguished between the two frames and reported elevated levels of guilt and shame when the information was framed negatively.

Another function of the sociopsychological infrastructure is establishing a differentiation between the ingroup and the rival and a superior position of the ingroup (Bar-Tal, 2007b, 2013). According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), individuals derive part of their self-esteem from the groups to which they belong. Therefore, they are motivated to uphold a positive view of their group and to maintain optimal distinctiveness between their own group and other groups (Brewer, 1991). The sociopsychological infrastructure contributes to establishing such distinctiveness and sharpens it by delegitimizing the opponent while presenting the ingroup in highly positive terms. It has been argued that groups involved in intractable conflict tend to develop oppositional zero-sum identities (Brewer, 2011). Accordingly, Kelman (1999) suggests that in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, each party believes that in order to maintain the legitimacy of its own identity, it must delegitimize the other party.

Finally, Bar-Tal (2007b, 2013) discusses the role of the sociopsychological infrastructure in preparing society members for the conflict and mobilizing them to participate in it. By emphasizing the ingroup's victimization and delegitimizing the opponent, the sociopsychological infrastructure prepares society members for the negative experiences and difficulties that await them in the future of the conflict. As a result, society members become attentive and sensitive to cues of threat, so that when the threats materialize, they do not come as a surprise. This provides a sense of predictability and immunizes society members against impending threats.

However, if the sociopsychological infrastructure only prepared society members for the worst, it could soon lead to despair. Hence, in addition to preparing, the sociopsychological infrastructure also mobilizes society members to participate in the conflict in order to defend themselves and advance the societal goals. By justifying the goals of the conflict, emphasizing the importance of security, and fostering patriotism and social unity, the sociopsychological infrastructure encourages society members to take part in the struggle against the enemy and make personal sacrifices on behalf of the group (Bar-Tal & Staub, 1997). An example for the importance of the sociopsychological infrastructure for mobilizing participation in the conflict can be found in the prevalence of messages reflecting the EOC in the training of new recruits to the Israeli army (Borovski-Sapir, 2004).

Institutionalization of the Sociopsychological Infrastructure

As mentioned earlier, the beliefs and emotions that comprise the sociopsychological infrastructure of intractable conflict tend to be widely shared among society members. Consequently, they occupy a central place in the societal discourse. Moreover, due to the functional role of the sociopsychological infrastructure in times of conflict, the involved societies devote great efforts to imparting the sociopsychological infrastructure to their members. This is evident in the frequent appearance of the elements of the infrastructure in numerous societal channels of communication and socialization (Bar-Tal, 2013). Consequently, most society members are exposed to the sociopsychological infrastructure from early childhood and throughout their lives, becoming highly familiar with it. For example, research reviewed by Nasie (Chap. 3) indicates that the contents of the Israeli EOC and collective memory of the conflict are presented to children already in preschools. Research by Teichman (Chap. 2) reveals the consequences of this socialization, demonstrating that Israeli children acquire negative views of Arabs at early ages. On the Palestinian side, research has found expressions of the sociopsychological infrastructure in the writings of children and adolescents (Nasie & Bar-Tal, 2012; Ricks, 2006; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2006), again demonstrating the early acquisition of the infrastructure.

These processes eventually lead to the institutionalization of the sociopsychological infrastructure and to the development of a culture of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013). According to Bar-Tal, a culture of conflict develops when the elements of the sociopsychological infrastructure are integrated into the society's cultural symbols, which communicate a particular meaning regarding the continuous experiences of the conflict. The symbols of the culture of conflict eventually become routinized in group members' daily lives (Bar-Tal, Abutbul-Selinger, & Raviv, 2014). Routinization takes place when society members engage regularly in practices related to the conflict. For example, Palestinians must go through Israeli checkpoints and deal with various restrictions to their freedom of movement (Longo, Canetti, & Hite-Rubin, 2014), and Israelis have to go through security searches at the entry to every public place. Routinization also involves exposure to images and

symbols of the conflict (e.g., monuments, street names, weapons, shelters) and to information about the conflict in society members' daily lives. Finally, routinization involves integration of words and expressions relating to the conflict into the language. For example, Israelis often use military terminology in their discourse, even when referring to issues that are not related to the conflict (Tsur, 2013).

Implications of the Sociopsychological Infrastructure

The research reviewed thus far has suggested that the sociopsychological infrastructure of intractable conflict is functional for dealing with the challenges that the conflict poses. Bar-Tal (2007b, 2013) points out, however, that the sociopsychological infrastructure has other consequences, which are not necessarily functional (see also Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011). The sociopsychological infrastructure justifies the conflict and encourages society members to participate in it and to defend their group with force. When this takes place among both parties to the conflict, the result is continuation and escalation of the conflict.

Moreover, once the sociopsychological infrastructure crystallizes, it can instigate a freezing tendency, which involves a preference for maintaining one's existing beliefs and resistance to changing them. Freezing leads to reluctance to search for alternative information and resistance to persuasive arguments (Kruglanski, 2004; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Consequently, the sociopsychological infrastructure becomes a prism through which society members process and evaluate new information, resulting in selective and biased information processing (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011). This reduces the likelihood that new information, which suggests possibilities of resolving the conflict peacefully, would be considered seriously. Several studies conducted among Israeli Jews indeed demonstrate that adherence to the ethos of conflict affects the processing and interpretation of new information in ways contribute to the continuation of the conflict and reduce the likelihood of peaceful resolution (Bar-Tal, Raviv, Raviv, & Degani-Hirsch, 2007; Porat, Halperin, & Bar-Tal, 2015). One practical implication of these findings is that Israelis and Palestinians may disregard peaceful gestures coming from their opponents because those are inconsistent with their sociopsychological infrastructure. For example, the peace initiative of the Arab League was proposed in 2002 and reified by the League several times since. Israel, however, has never responded to the initiative and refuses to discuss it.

Conclusion

Societies cannot survive and function if the individuals that comprise them are not well adjusted and functioning. This may drive societies to develop collective mechanisms that allow society members to cope with difficulties that they may face (deVries, 1995). We have seen that societies involved in intractable conflict develop

a unique sociopsychological infrastructure, which assists them in dealing with the challenges of the conflict but at the same time contributes to the continuation of the conflict. The question arises, therefore, whether the sociopsychological infrastructure is in fact beneficial to societies that are involved in intractable conflicts. I suggest that the answer to this question depends on the outcomes that the group believes are desirable and feasible. Recall that members of societies that are involved in intractable conflicts believe that the conflict is irreconcilable and that the goals over which it is being fought are essential to their existence (Bar-Tal, 2007b, 2013; Kriesberg, 1993). Hence, they may not believe that peaceful resolution of the conflict is feasible or desirable in the foreseeable future. If this is the case, then the society needs to prepare to face the challenges of a protracted conflict, and the sociopsychological infrastructure remains functional. However, if the group believes that conflict resolution is feasible and desirable and decides to engage in a process of peacemaking, then the sociopsychological infrastructure becomes counterproductive and a barrier to conflict resolution (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011). This discussion points out the paradoxical role of the sociopsychological infrastructure of intractable conflict. On the one hand, it helps societies and their members address the challenges that the conflict poses. But on the other hand, it contributes to the continuation of the conflict, which is the situation that creates those challenges in the first place.

It follows that any attempts to resolve intractable conflicts and minimize their detrimental effects on individuals and societies must take into consideration the nature of the sociopsychological infrastructure, the functions that it serves, and its implications. Given that the sociopsychological infrastructure plays a role in the maintenance and escalation of conflicts, changing its component beliefs and emotions may be a necessary step toward achieving reconciliation and developing a culture of peace (Bar-Tal, 2013). Yet it is important to keep in mind that the sociopsychological infrastructure serves important functions for the members of societies involved in intractable conflicts. Thus, in order to pose a significant challenge to the sociopsychological infrastructure of intractable conflict, any alternative infrastructure must include different means of addressing the challenges that the societies involved in the conflict face. Moreover, the peacemaking process brings with it additional challenges, which also need to be addressed (Rosler, Chap. 14). Only when these challenges are successfully addressed can members of societies involved in intractable conflicts, including Israelis and Palestinians, hope to not only cope and endure the adversities and suffering that these conflicts cause but to eliminate them completely.

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