Overcoming Psychological Barriers to Peace Making: The Influence of Mediating Beliefs about Losses

Daniel Bar-Tal
School of Education, Tel-Aviv University
and
Eran Halperin
Department of Psychology, Stanford University

One of the fundamental questions that preoccupies students of conflict resolution as well as the international community is how to overcome the psychological barriers that are a major obstacle to peace making and building in societies involved in serious and violent conflicts. These conflicts are over real goods such as territories, natural resources, self-determination, and/or basic values and the real issues of goals contradictions have to be addressed in conflict resolution. But, no doubt it would be much easier to resolve them, had they not been accompanied by an intense socio-psychological repertoire, which becomes an investment in conflict and evolves into a foundation of culture of conflict. It is rigid and resistant to change, fuels its continuation, inhibits de-escalation of the conflict and thus serves as the major barrier to its peaceful resolution.

One of the basic challenges for societies involved in intractable conflict which aspire to embark on the road of peace is to overcome this barrier and begin to construct a new repertoire that facilitates the process of peace making and prepares the society members to live in peace. The present chapter will examine ways of overcoming the psychological barriers to peace process and outline initial ideas that may be helpful in stimulating further thoughts and empirical research. The chapter will first briefly introduce the nature of intractable conflict and the culture of conflict that evolves with it and gives rise to the psychological barriers that prevent the peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliation. The main part of the chapter will describe ways of overcoming the psychological barriers, focusing on the role of mediating beliefs concerning losses of the parties involved in conflict. This part will first discuss the process of unfreezing. Then it will present the notion of mediating beliefs that instigate the reevaluation of the conflict situation. The focus will be mostly on mediating beliefs that concern losses. Finally the chapter will present the alternative societal beliefs of ethos of peace which are necessary for peace building.
Evolvement of the Psychological Barriers.

Nature of the Conflict and Evolvement of the Culture of Conflict

Conflicts are an inseparable part of every intergroup relation but we focus on those conflicts that are prolonged, harsh and violent, often called intractable\(^1\). In these conflicts the involved societies evolve culture of conflict of which the dominant parts are societal beliefs\(^2\) of collective memories and of ethos of conflict, as well as collective emotional orientation (Bar-Tal, 2007a). Collective memory of conflict evolves to describe the “history” of the conflict to society members (Cairns & Roe, 2003; Halbwachs, 1992; Wertsch, 2002). Ethos of conflict provides dominant orientation to a society at present and directs it for the future societal challenges (Bar-Tal, 2000a; Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006)\(^3\). These narratives are selective, biased and distorted as their major function is to satisfy the societal needs rather than provide objective account of reality\(^4\). They therefore justify the position of the society in conflict, portray it in very positive light and as the victim of the conflict and delegitimize the

\(^1\)Intractable conflicts are characterized as lasting at least 25 years, over goals that are perceived as existential, being violent, perceived as unsolvable and of zero sum nature, greatly preoccupying society members, with involved parties heavily investing in their continuation (see Azar, 1990; Bar-Tal, 1998, 2007a; Kriesberg, 1998).

\(^2\)Societal beliefs are defined as the society’s members shared cognitions on topics and issues that are of special concern to society and contribute to its unique characteristics. They are organized around themes and consist of such contents as collective memories, ideologies, goals, myths, etc. (Bar-Tal, 2000a).

\(^3\) In earlier work it was proposed that the challenges of the intractable conflict lead to the development of eight themes of societal beliefs that comprise ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998, 2000a). They include: Societal beliefs about the justness of own goals, societal beliefs about security, societal beliefs of positive collective self image, societal beliefs of own victimization, societal beliefs of delegitimizing the opponent, societal beliefs of patriotism, societal beliefs of unity and societal beliefs of peace.

\(^4\) This idea is based on conceptual and empirical literature which suggests that successful coping with threatening and stressful conditions requires construction of a meaningful world view (e.g., Antonovsky, 1987; Frankl, 1963; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Taylor, 1983)
opponent. In addition to societal beliefs, the socio-psychological repertoire in situations of intractable conflicts includes collective emotional orientations. The most notable is the collective orientation of fear (Bar-Tal, 2001), but in addition, they may be dominated by hatred and anger (see also for example, Kaufman, 2001; Petersen, 2002; Scheff, 1994). These emotions play a central role in perpetuating the conflict as they underlie distrust, hostility and violence of society members (de Rivera & Paez, 2007). The described socio-psychological repertoire is disseminated to society members, maintained and institutionalized by societal institutions, transmitted to the young generations, permeates into cultural products and eventually evolves into a culture of conflict (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2007b; Ross, 1998). It fuels the continuation of the conflict, functioning as a major obstacle to peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Over their long history, intractable conflicts are not only managed, but there often are attempts to resolve them peacefully, -- a difficult, complex, and challenging mission. The mere attempts to resolve the conflict peacefully require major changes in the previously described repertoire. But this repertoire cannot and does not change overnight. Even when the groups’ leaders resolve the conflict peacefully and sign a peace agreement, this repertoire continues to inhibit the development of peaceful relations until sometimes it changes slowly via reconciliation process\(^5\), if and when it takes place. Changing the repertoire that was dominant during the conflict era into one conducive to the peace process, is therefore not a naturally occurring process, but one that requires active efforts.

\(^5\) Reconciliation process goes beyond the agenda of formal conflict resolution to changing the motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes and emotions by the great majority of the society members in order to achieve as the outcome mutual recognition and acceptance between the rival societies (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004).
**Nature of the Psychological Barriers**

If the needed change was simple, many of the conflicts could have been resolved and the involved societies could establish new amiable and peaceful relations. However the contents do not easily change when alternative arguments are provided. The reality is very complicated and painful because it is extremely difficult to change the repertoire that is central, held with great confidence, fulfills many functions for the individual and the collective during the conflict and has been continuously supported by the channels of communication and the institutions (see for example Bar-Tal, 2007b).

The reason for the above described difficulty is the combination of the specific contents regarding the conflict (as described above) and the rigid and closed structure of the socio-psychological repertoire; that is, of its beliefs and attitudes, fueled by emotions (see for example the role of fear, Bar-Tal, 2001). The rigid and closed structural characteristics of the socio-psychological infrastructure constitute the foundations of the barriers because they are directly responsible for the freezing state of the contents, preventing even an entertainment of alternative information that suggests peaceful resolution of the conflict. The state of freezing is reflected in continuous reliance on the held repertoire of the conflict, the reluctance to search for alternative information and resistance to persuasive arguments which contradict held positions (Baron, 1988; Kruglanski, 2004; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Kunda, 1990). This state is underlined by specific closure needs (see Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski & Sulloway, 2003) which means that society members tend "to freeze on their prior knowledge if such knowledge was congruent with their needs" (Kruglanski, 2004, pp.17-18). The specific closure needs are elevated by the perceived benefits of being in closure and/or costs of

---

6 Recently the causes for the rigidity and closure of the societal repertoire in the context of intractable conflicts were presented and elaborated by Bar-Tal and Halperin, (in preparation).
lacking them (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996, see examples of empirical evidence provided by Bar-Joseph & Kruglanski, 2003; Golec & Federico, 2004). In this situation the handling of information is characterized by top-down processing: It is affected more by what fits the contents of the held socio-psychological repertoire and less by the evidence of incongruent information which even when is absorbed is processed selectively and in biased and distorting manner (Bar-Tal, 2007a). That is to say, harsh and prolonged conflicts with the evolved repertoire tend to "close minds" and facilitate tunnel vision, thus precluding the consideration of alternative approaches to continuation of the conflict.

The Process of Overcoming the Psychological Barriers

In order to pave the route to a resolution of the conflict and later to a lasting peace, a new repertoire must be formed and disseminated among society members. This repertoire should include ideas about the need to resolve the conflict peacefully, optional solutions for conflict resolution that could be accepted by both sides, trust of the rival, beliefs that the agreement can be implemented, and eventually recognition of the need to reconcile and readiness to carry it out (Bar-Tal, in press). These ideas have to be adopted by society members who then should be mobilized for the peace process.

A very general framework of political information processing proposed by the political scientist, Sniderman (1975), can be useful for our analysis. He proposed three phases to the process of changing the held political repertoire into a new one. The first phase is the phase of exposure in which society members are exposed to alternative new beliefs and attitudes. Exposure depends on various internal societal factors -- among them availability of communication channels in the society and their openness to free speech, extent and type of pressure to conformity and the readiness of society members to be exposed to new alternative information. Once society members absorb the new beliefs, they have to comprehend them in
order to store them in their memory. Finally, in order to adopt them, they have to be motivated.

Indeed the most important psychological process involved in unfreezing is creating the motivation, first to reevaluate the held beliefs and attitudes, then to search for new information and ideas, and finally to accept the new alternatives. Hence, overcoming the psychological barriers that prevent a change of the repertoire that fuels the conflict is a two stage process: 1. The first is unfreezing of the held repertoire which amounts to an arousal of a motivation to evaluate the held repertoire. 2. The second is seizing\(^7\) which refers to the readiness to accept alternative repertoire which facilitates peace making and eventually becomes the foundation of culture of peace. This new repertoire which includes recognizing the need to compromise, posing new goals, forming new view and relations with the rival, developing new view of the conflict, and so on has to be first formulated and later disseminated among society members. This endeavor is especially challenging because in most of the conflict situations, there is need also for courage to become different than the majority of society members in addition to motivation to accept the new beliefs and attitudes.

We suggest that the process of unfreezing usually begins as a result of appearance of a new idea (or ideas) that is inconsistent with the held beliefs and attitudes and therefore creates some kind of tension, dilemma or even an internal conflict, which may stimulate people to move away from their basic position and look for alternative ideas (e.g., Abelson, Aronson, McGuire, Newcomb, Rosenberg, & Tannenbaum, 1968; Bartunek, 1993; Festinger, 1957; Kruglanski, 1989). This new idea, which we call Mediating Belief, motivates to reevaluate the held beliefs and in fact it leads to their unfreezing on the way to possible

\(^7\) On the basis of Kruglanski and Webster (1996) work, we define seizing as the tendency to form beliefs.
adoption of alternative beliefs (that is, their seizing). These mediating beliefs may appear spontaneously in the mind of people without any special circumstances, but usually they come into mind as a result of external conditions, which force a reevaluation of the held repertoire. In our case of conflict, once the mediating beliefs appear and spread among society members, they motivate them for intensive evaluation of the held repertoire and searching for alternative beliefs that may motivate the society members to change the situation and encourage peaceful solution of the conflict. Eventually on a very general level of description, we suggest that when the peaceful context is well established after peaceful conflict resolution, then, with time and through a long process of reconciliation, a new ethos of peace may be solidified. This process is depicted in Figure 1.\(^8\) We will now describe the process in more detail, focusing mostly on the unfreezing part with the mediating beliefs of losses.

Insert Figure 1 about here

**The Unfreezing Process**

According to the classic conception offered by Lewin (1947) every process of cognitive change, in individuals and groups, requires unfreezing. Hence a precondition for the acceptance and internalization of any alternative content about the conflict or its resolution depends on the ability to destabilize the rigid structure of the socio-psychological repertoire about the conflict.

We suggest that the idea that fuels the motivation to unfreeze is based upon the recognition in the incompatibility between the current state and/or the perceived past on the

\(^8\) We realize that the described process is the desired one and not all the processes follow this path. Unfortunately many of the processes stop at different stages because of various reasons, and some even regress to early stages. In essence the process does not have to be linear but may be dynamic with progress and regression.
one hand, and the desired future, on the other hand. To state the matter differently, motivation to evaluate the held beliefs and entertain alternative ones is based on the understanding that the continuation of current situation (that is of the conflict), will not lead to a better or a desired future but even may hurt the fundamental goals and/or needs of the society (Bartunek, 1993). In such situations, the forces that push towards change (driving forces) must be stronger than the restraining ones (see Marcus, 2006 for elaboration). One of the most important challenges of every attempt to remove or even to moderate the psychological barriers to peace is to identify both kinds of forces and to strengthen the driving ones as a substitute to the restraining ones. Moreover, a necessary precondition for the creation of such motivation is widespread societal beliefs among society members in the inner strength of the collective and in its capability to cope with the expected challenges that peace process brings (Marcus, 2006).

From a cognitive point of view, Kruglanski and his colleagues (Kruglanski & Freund, 1983; Freund, Kruglanski, & Shpitzajzen, 1985) proposed a meta cognitive –motivational theory that explains the process of unfreezing. They point to two major potential contributors to move the society from the situation of motivation for specific content to motivation for openness to alternative ideas. The first mechanism is the fear of invalidity also defined by Kunda (1990) as "accuracy motivation". According to it, when individuals get the impression that they will be held responsible for their decision, they tend to use a more thorough information processing strategies. The second mechanism is the appearance of a conclusional and directional motivation that suggests that the present way of thinking is detrimental to important goals (see also Tetlock, Peterson, & Lerner, 1996). By and large, both mechanisms reduce closure by presenting different methods that emphasize the costs of freezing and/or
the benefits of openness (Kruglanski, 2004). Hence, highlighting the costs of misperceptions or biased and distorted information processing may induce openness. In turn, when validity concerns are salient, people tend to rely on thorough information search and consider various alternative appraisals to explain conflict events as well as entertain new solutions how to end it (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996).

Another way to trigger unfreezing is related to the emotional system. From an affective perspective, extensive studies have shown that emotions may play an important role in guiding information processing. This assumption relies on the well-established relations between emotions and human motivation for information processing (Frijda, Kuipers & ter-Schure, 1989). Rogers (1983) in his protection motivation theory suggested in line with the expectancy value analysis that fear appeals are effective to the extent that they convince the audience that the consequences are severe and very likely to occur if the recommendation will not take place. In this line, the meta-analysis of fear studies found that use of fear is associated with increased persuasion (Boster & Mongeau, 1984). Similarly, according to the “affective intelligence theory” (Marcus & MacKuen, 1993), medium levels of emotions like fear and anxiety, which are part of the “surveillance system,” will move people from their basic perceptions, cause them to reassess their attitudes and ask for additional, new information about the situation (Marcus, 2000 see also Janis, 1967, who also points out to the

---

9 Empirical studies on the individual level (Kruglanski & Freund, 1983; Tetlock, 1983) found that individuals that experienced such motivational guidance showed less of a primacy effect in impression formation, less tendency to use ethnic stereotypes in their evaluations of essay quality, and less anchoring when making probability judgments.

10 It should be noted that other scholars in different fields of research have pointed to some other factors that may induce unfreezing. For example, Block and Williams (2002) have found that elaboration about health issues “unfreezes” information processing and leads to persuasion and greater change appraisal.
effectiveness of the medium level of fear in persuasion). Within the context of conflict studies, recently, Rosler (2006) found that fear was a pivotal factor in all alternative peace plans within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Paez (2006), who examined the impact of different emotions on peace negotiation in the Basque country, showed that in some cases fear can move people's opinions towards supporting negotiation with terrorists. Hence, it seems that a monitored and moderated use of fear might be the trigger for unfreezing in the context of conflicts.

**Mediating Beliefs for Unfreezing**

We suggest that the process of societal unfreezing on a large scale in situations of severe conflicts usually begins within a unique context that triggers motivating beliefs which then instigate openness. Despite our recognition of the importance of the context, in the current chapter we focus mainly on the contents of beliefs and not on the context. Yet, before elaborating about the specific beliefs, we will now briefly point out some changes in the context that may instigate reevaluation of the held repertoire. We call the new context as a facilitating one that enables the appearance of the new mediating beliefs.

Firstly the context may change as a result of accumulation of conflict experience like fatigue, vast human and property losses, continuous stalemate and lack of effective governance. Secondly as a result of major events like the outbreak of a war, dramatic peace gesture or extreme violent events. Thirdly this may happen as a result of conciliatory and trust-building actions by the rival, which lead to perceived change regarding the opponents' character, intentions and goals. Fourthly change may take place because of internal events or processes unrelated to conflict (recession, hunger, appearance of a new enemy) that indirectly create the motivation to reassess the centrality and importance of the conflict. Fifthly, a third powerful party may change the context by an intervention. That intervention can take various
forms such as mediation, bombing, sending troops or even economic boycott. Fifthly, coming
to power of new leaders, who develop new approaches to the conflict may create new
context. In addition, arriving of a new generation which has a different look at the conflict
and its implications may create a new context. Finally, a need to reevaluate the situation may
be the result of more global geopolitical processes and events that are not directly related to
the conflict (collapse of a superpower, international climate), but may eventually affect the
parties.

Each of the abovementioned conditions may contribute to unfreezing. The ultimate
goal is adoption (seizing) of alternative repertoire that eventually may lead to the acceptance
and internalization of new ethos of peace. This ethos must act as the opposite equivalent of
the repertoire of conflict, in terms of content and structure, in a way that will successfully
fulfill the same needs and aspirations of the in-group members. But, in the absence of actual
peace and reconciliation the attempt to provide a new socio-psychological repertoire that will
fulfill those needs and aspirations is a great challenge. Fulfilling those needs in the two clear-
cut situations - intractable violent conflict or viable peace – looks much easier than doing so
in the "transformational" period of time between violent conflict and peace, full of
uncertainty and often with continuing violence and active opposition groups.

Hence, we suggest that in the interim period a society should develop temporary
substitutive mediating beliefs that would trigger evaluation of alternative solutions and bridge
the psychological gap between the repertoires of conflict and peace. Those mediating beliefs
will also play an important role in establishing the rationalization for change and moderating
the cognitive dissonance, embedded in such a demanding process. Therefore, the content of
these beliefs should rely on a solid ground of arguments like: "the change is inevitable", "it
serves the national interest" or even "it is important for national security" (Bar-Siman-Tov,
In order to accurately serve its goals, the mediating beliefs should introduce new, innovative issues into the public agenda and develop into consensual views. Those issues change the focus of public discourse and bring in new questions into the conflict-peace equation. In a way, these innovative questions or issues correspond to the basic principles of the unfreezing process. They motivate people to engage in deeper and more open thinking by highlighting the current and future threats and costs of the conflict while developing the idea that the conflict can be resolved peacefully (see also Janis & Mann, 1977).

The basic principles and inner logic that guide the construction of the mediating beliefs are similar for both the stronger and the weaker parties of the conflict (see Kriesberg, 2007, pp. 38-43 for an elaborate discussion on inequality between parties in conflict), because both usually have to compromise or withdraw from their ultimate aspirations, goals and dreams. However, considering the asymmetry, it would be only natural to assume, that the specific contents of mediating beliefs that motivate unfreezing differ between the groups.\(^{11}\)

We will try to point out to few understandings on what are the more useful mediating beliefs for the unfreezing process, assuming that they are not mutual exclusive.

**Mediating Beliefs about Losses**

The basic proposition of the present chapter is that the most efficient mediating beliefs that can lead to unfreezing focus on losses.\(^{12}\) This proposition is based on insights from the *Prospect Theory* (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) that were adjusted to the context of conflicts (for more elaborate examples of such implementations of the theory, see: Levy,

---

\(^{11}\) The lion share of our discussion will focus on the beliefs of the powerful side. This is mainly due to the fact that in most cases, the radical reevaluations of alternatives, as well as most compromises, are required from the side that holds most of the tangible and non tangible resources.

\(^{12}\) We would like to note that we realize that society members may raise different mediating beliefs that refer also to benefits of the peace process and other contents.
According to the prospect theory people are more reluctant to lose what they have than to gain what they do not have (Tversky & Kahneman, 1986). This asymmetry is expressed by the fact that the value function is steeper on the loss side than on the gain side. Through the years prospect theory's claim about the superiority of the influence of losses vis-à-vis gains, was reinforced by other psychological theories and research. One notable example is the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), according to which loss of resources as a result of a traumatic event would be a more important contributor to the evolvement of psychological distress, when compared to equivalent lack of gain of resources (Hobfoll, Canetti-Nisim & Johnson, 2006). Similar pattern of negativity bias is frequently displayed within the wide literature of persuasion, which generally claims that negative events and information tend to be more closely attended and better remembered and that they strongly impact evaluation, judgment and action tendencies (see reviews by Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994; Peeters & Czapinski, 1990). The premise about the unwillingness to lose what a party has is well anchored in our experience that no party in conflict yields willingly its already possessed, advantages, goods and commodities such as territory, resources, wealth, status, power, prestige, control etc.

One of the most important methods to emphasize potential losses due to the continuation of the conflict and reduce the loss perceived in a peaceful settlement is to reframe the Reference Point. Prospect theory stipulates that people react more strongly to changes in assets than to net asset levels, which means that they react to gains and losses

\[13\] It is worth noting that the motivation to reevaluate attitudes and behavior within the context of a conflict does not always stem from gain-loss considerations. We would like to point out that there is a part in every society, who judges the situation from moral perspective. Yet, according to the moral development theory of Kohlberg (1984), most people are not situated in the high stages of moral development, and hence, the abovementioned group is in most cases a negligible minority.
from a reference point rather than to absolute values of gain or loss (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1986; Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1991). In most cases the reference point is the status quo, but in some situations it can take the form of other predicted scenarios like the "aspiration level" (Payne, Laughhunn & Crum, 1981) or even the achievement of the desired goals (Heath, Larrick & Wu, 1999). Very often, members of societies that are involved in conflicts are socialized to believe, on the one hand, in the feasibility of future gains or even victory of their own group and, on the other hand, in the availability of resources to continue the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007a). These two societal beliefs are of great importance in maintaining the conflict. The alternative option of paying high prices or even a possible defeat is most frequently ignored. Naturally, when the compromises often required by the peaceful settlement of the conflict are compared to the ultimate aspirations, goals or even the status-quo (mostly for the strong side), they are perceived as a huge loss.

Hence, the process of unfreezing should aspire to situate the loss in the conflict, or loss of various present important gains in the future, or possible future deterioration of the conflict situation as another alternative, that is as a possible reference point. Within this perspective, the potential losses must be presented in a concrete way, as relevant to individuals and the collective well being, as harming central basic needs and as occurring with high probability. When compared to that point, the losses attached to peace and compromise might seem of less value and a motivation for considering alternative solutions may rise. We will now outline few of the possible contents that refer to different types of losses.

Possible future losses.
One type of losses refers to costs that can incur due to the continuation of the conflict. As indicated on the basis of the prospect theory this focus is more effective in unfreezing than emphasizing the benefits of peace. Society members have difficulty to imagine peace after living through years in a conflict where the reality is well understood and predicted and the patterns of behavior became well established and practiced. When they do, the vision is full of ambiguity, uncertainty and perceived as risky (Mitzen, 2006). As a result, instead of highlighting the advantages of peace, there is need to arouse fear by pointing out that the losses from the continuation of the conflict situation are higher than the losses from the possible settlement of the conflict, which requires compromises. Although this approach may work for both the weak and the strong sides in a conflict, it is especially effective for the strong side that already has many of the benefits and is required to give some of them up at in the peaceful conflict resolution.

Moreover, in many cases, for both sides of the conflict, the basic assumption that perpetuates the continuation of the conflict is that time is "on our side" and eventually "we either will win the conflicts or at least will improve our gains in its settlement". Thus of crucial importance is an appearance of a new belief which states that “time is not on our side” which means that the future may bring higher costs in comparison to benefits. For the strong side, a comparison between the expected losses in case of peace and the ones in case of defeat may bring about beliefs such as "we do not have resources to continue with the conflict" or "we may pay a heavy price if the present situation continues ". The presented beliefs are liable to suggest alternative (and not very popular) future scenarios based upon a new reference point that should be compared to the one of compromise and peace. This new comparison may motivate people to a much deeper evaluation of all alternatives. Furthermore, when using that new comparative perspective, the costs that are required by the
peace process, may be seen as less threatening in comparison to costs of continuing the conflict.

Three notable examples for changes that were driven, at least to some extent, by the described processes can be taken from the peacemaking process in Northern Ireland, South Africa and the Middle-East. In Northern Ireland, Mac Ginty and Darby (2002) have recently argued that back in the early 90th, the understanding that future change is inevitable and that such change might consist of fundamental losses to the unionist side in the conflict, was one of the most central motivations to reconsider their position and finally to join the negotiations in order to gain influence over possible agreement. The writers quote a statement by a senior Orangeman which according to them reflected a common view shared by the unionists: "Every time something comes along it is worse than what came before" (Mac Ginty & Darby, 2002, p. 23).

Within the context of the South-African conflict, Mufson (1991) have pointed to similar view of the unfreezing process when suggesting that since de Klerk and his people realized that "White South Africans' bargaining position would only grow weaker with time" (p. 124), they opened negotiations and made every effort to move as quickly as they could towards a viable agreement.

Within the Middle-Eastern context, recently the Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Olmert, in an attempt to mobilize public support for his peace process, said "A day will come in which the solution of two states will collapse and we will face a struggle in the South African style for the right of equal vote. In the moment this will happen, the state of Israel will be doomed" (Haaretz, November 29, 2007). And on another occasion, he said that: "Israel needs to internalize that even its supportive friends on the international stage conceive of the country's future on the basis of the 1967 borders and with Jerusalem divided … If
Israel will have to deal with a reality of one state for two peoples it could bring about the end of the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. That is a danger one cannot deny; it exists, and is even realistic.” (Jerusalem Post, January 1, 2008)

Similar but not identical beliefs about future losses may motivate reevaluation of existing beliefs among the leaders and the public in general on the weak side. For this side, unfreezing will be motivated, in most cases, by an immediate willingness to stop the losses and suffering of the society members, and/or beliefs that in the current stage of the conflict, the gains that they can get in present peaceful resolution of the conflict constitute the best deal that can be achieved and continuation of the conflict will not bring more benefits. In other words, the motivation of the weak side towards unfreezing, can be driven by the understanding that compromises that current peaceful resolution of the conflict will require (vis-à-vis the ultimate aspirations), are lower in comparison to possible losses embedded in the future peace agreement.

Both these themes were emphasized in a speech that was given by the current President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, in the Annapolis Conference held between Palestinians and Israelis in November 27th, 2007. Most importantly, he stressed the fact that what Palestinians can get today, is the best they can get in comparison to future potential alternatives: "The possibilities offered by today’s conference must not be wasted. This window of opportunity might never open again … we must not lose this opportunity that might never be repeated". In addition, he pointed to the necessity of bringing peace in order to put an end to the Palestinians suffering: "This is how we will end occupation and long years of suffering for our refugees" and he added: "to Palestinian mothers who are awaiting the return of their jailed sons; to the children who are dreaming of a new life and a prosperous and more peaceful future; to our brave prisoners and
to all of my sons and daughters wherever you are: Have faith in tomorrow and the future because an independent Palestine is coming"

**Past and present losses.**

Another direction of the mediating beliefs that focus on losses can refer to the past by pointing out to the enormous price that the society involved in conflict paid through the years. These mediating beliefs focus on the direct and indirect costs of the continuation of the conflict, as accumulation of already incurred costs. Often they first of all point out to the huge human losses which cannot be brought back to life and there is no compensation to the families. They may draw attention to the destruction that was caused by conflict and the continuous suffering of society members. In addition they may emphasize the great financial investments that come on the expense of spending for various societal needs. This may lead to public debates which illuminate alternative scenarios in which the conflict resources (human, financial, societal and psychological) would have been invested differently. A successful dissemination of these beliefs may create permanent mechanisms which evaluate every failure through the prism of the huge investments in the conflict when at least some of them may be also recognized as vain and waste. As previously suggested, these beliefs will not necessarily convince people in the rightness of peace, but they will motivate them to unfreeze and further invest in reevaluating the situation.

Apparently, the mediating beliefs about past and present losses were one of the most important contributors to the change in the American public opinion and then the American policy regarding the war in Vietnam (Burstein & Freudenburg, 1978). The main theme underlie the operations of anti-war civil society groups, as well as of anti-war politicians, focused on the huge costs of the war mainly in the aspects of human life and financial resources (Small, 1987). Similar, though not identical trends can be identified within the U.S
political and societal sphere in reference to the current American war in Iraq. It might be too soon to be decisive about the results of these trends, but to say the least, they seem to create some significant movement within the American public opinion (Muller, 2005). Despite the fact that the American involvement in Vietnam and Iraq does not meet most standards of intractable conflicts, we use them as an example because they accurately illustrate how mediating content about past costs destabilize war related public opinion.

**New losses related to other potential threats**

Another idea that may destabilize the rigidity of the repertoire of conflict is the widening of the collective perspective, by suggesting that there are more important threats or goals within the local, regional or global arena. These goals or threats are exterior to the current conflict, and hence require a broader evaluation of the comprehensive situation. That broader evaluation may lead to mediating beliefs that refer to potential very high losses in the future if the conflict will not be resolved. In this case, the costs that are bound within a viable peace process might seem negligible when compared to potential price of inadequate coping with the other threats, goals or challenges. In addition identification of new important internal goals that cannot be fulfilled because of the resources consumed by the ongoing conflict may also raise the need to reevaluate the situation. Under the new mediating beliefs, the need to solve the current conflict becomes much more urgent, concrete and relevant and hence, society members are likely to become more open and receptive to innovative solutions.

An example for a new internal challenge, that enforced reevaluation about the status quo of the conflict, can be tracked within the South-African conflict resolution process. According to Sisk (1989), the rise of a new reactionary right-wing party in the late 80s (Conservative Party) accelerated a peaceful process of transition because it forced whites, in
general, and voters of the governing party (National Party) in particular, to reassess their political views about the conflict, and develop alternative perspective on the Apartheid regime. The new political challenge made the National Party leadership realize that if they will not act immediately, they might lose their long standing control of the government. This new threat was one of the factors that lead to the process of unfreezing about the policy towards blacks.

Within a more global perspective, Israeli then Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, had used new emerging external threats, to convince Israeli citizens in the urgency of the need to solve the local Israeli-Palestinian conflict, even if the Israelis will be required to make huge compromises in order to achieve such peace. Barak has frequently stated that the ongoing international terrorism, the growth of fundamentalist Islamism and the possible acquisition of nuclear weapons by Islamic countries, outweigh any potential Israeli achievement in future negotiation with the Palestinians, and, hence, Israel should make any effort to resolve the conflict immediately (Sher, 2001, p.21).

**Awareness of closed mindedness and losses.**

Finally, in a relatively paradoxical way, for both sides of the conflict, an evolvement of the understanding regarding the one-sided rigidity of the conflict socio-psychological repertoire may set in motion the exact opposite dynamic. In some cases, once society members (or at least some of them) come to recognize the closed mindedness of their own society, they might push toward examining alternative themes. Frequently these understandings develop as a consequence of an unnecessary war, or perceived missed opportunity for peace. These are the prototypical cases in which society members are forced to acknowledge the costs of the fact that they did not give proper thoughts to alternative ideas. In other words, they become aware of the losses that took place because of the closed
mindedness. Furthermore, such occasions are a fertile ground for the development of even more daring perceptions, like "the conflict is not right", "perhaps we also contribute to the continuation of the conflict" or "the other side also has a case", that may further fuel a process of change.

Seizing New Socio-Psychological Repertoire – Ethos of Peace

We suggest that the presented mediating beliefs about losses fulfill important role in the unfreezing process on the way to the exposure and seizing of the new repertoire that is conducive to the peace making. As Figure 1 pointed out, this new repertoire can evolve when the context is supportive to the peace process. This means that the rival groups at least begin peaceful conflict resolution process, accompanied by concrete steps to solidify the emerging new societal beliefs, attitudes and emotions, such as reciprocal acts of good will, meetings between the representatives of the rival groups, launching peace education and so on (see Bar-Tal, in press: Kelman, 2004). It is beyond the scope of the present chapter to elaborate on the process of seizing which in fact is a process of persuasion.\textsuperscript{14}

We argue that the evolved new societal beliefs and attitudes eventually have to crystallize into a new ethos of peace that can serve as a foundation for peace culture. This gradual and long process depends on the peaceful context that is a necessary condition for its evolvement. The establishment of context of peace requires complete cessation of violence, setting institutionalized mechanisms for resolving disagreements, constructing massive social education for constructing culture of peace, building cooperative relations in every sphere of

\textsuperscript{14} Social psychology has developed a number of conceptions and an extensive bulk of empirical studies through the years that deal with the problem of persuasion and attitude change which are reviewed elsewhere (see the reviews by Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Petty & Wegener, 1998).
life, and active reciprocal acts of friendship that promote trust and sensitivity to the needs of both sides.

We would like to end the chapter with a description of the peace repertoire. Bar-Tal proposed that achievement of reconciliation requires changes in at least five themes of societal beliefs that were formed during the conflict and forming of new beliefs that underlie an ethos of peace (Bar-Tal, 2000b, Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004).

**Societal Beliefs about Group’s Goals:** The basic goals and motivations of the society in reference to the conflict must be drastically revised. In particular, societal beliefs regarding the justness of the goals that underlay the outbreak and maintenance of the conflict must be changed (Bloomfield, Barnes & Huyse, 2003; Lederach, 1997). The new beliefs must present new goals for the society that allow compromise and therefore lead to peaceful conflict resolution. **Societal Beliefs about the Rival Group:** Additional crucial objective of the peace process is a change of the images of the adversary group (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Kaufman, 2006; Kelman, 1999; Theidon, 2006). It is important to legitimize and personalize its members. **Societal Beliefs about the Relationship with the Past Opponent:** The development of a peace process needs to facilitate formation of new societal beliefs about the relations between the two rival groups that emphasize the importance of cooperation and friendly relationships (Gardner Feldman, 1999; Krepon & Sevak, 1995). In other words, the well rooted "zero-sum" perception about the conflict must be replaced with a mixed-motives approach, which enables recognition of win-win or loss-loss situations. **Societal Beliefs about the History of the Conflict:** A successful peace process requires also a change of collective memories that were dominating the engaged societies during the conflict. There is need to revise these narratives that fueled the conflict into an outlook on the past that is synchronized with that of the former rival (Barkan, 2000; Borer, 2006; Borneman, 2002; Conway, 2003;
Nets-Zehngut, 2006; Rotberg, 2006; Salomon, 2004). Societal Beliefs about Peace: A peace process requires forming new societal beliefs that describe the multidimensional nature of peace, specify the conditions and mechanisms for its achievement (for example, negotiation with the rival and compromises), realistically outline the benefits and costs of achieving it, connote the meaning of living in peace, and, and especially emphasize the conditions for its maintenance.

A peace process also requires construction of general positive affects and specific emotions about the peaceful relations with the past opponent. Positive affects should accompany the described beliefs and indicate good feelings that the parties have towards each other and towards the new relations. With regard to emotions, a peace process requires a change in the collective emotional orientations of fear, anger and hatred, which often dominate societies in intractable conflict. Instead, there is need to develop at least an emotional orientation of hope, which reflects the desire for positive goals of maintaining peaceful and cooperative relations with the other party. This emotional orientation indicates positive outlook for the future, expectations of pleasant events, without violence and hostilities (Averill, Catlin & Chon, 1990; Bar-Tal, Halperin & de Rivera, 2007; Kaufman, 2006; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Snyder, 2000; Staub, Pearlman, Gubin & Hagengimana, 2005).

Finally, we would like to outline the needed qualities of the new repertoire. By and large, in order to offer a viable substitute to the ethos of the conflict, the repertoire of peace must equate with the ethos of conflicts' basic structural and essential characteristics. Most importantly, it must fulfill the fundamental needs of society members, given the new perceived reality of the conflict. It should especially address the basic needs for physical and economic security, while providing the content-related foundation stones for new positive
social identity of the group, which is no longer based upon the conflict or hate for the out-group. In addition, the new ethos should be constructed and presented as a new ideology, offering more important, more moral and more relevant beliefs in comparison to the previous ethos. The new beliefs should reaffirm the collective identity, as was so well done by the ethos of conflict. They should also relate to each other and hold together in order to ensure the stability of the new ethos. Similarly to the ethos of conflict, the stability of the alternative ethos should be strengthened by continuous messages of threat focusing on the dangers embedded in returning back to the previous situation of conflict.

To conclude, we note that we are dealing with very long, complex and challenging process that requires much thought and effort to advance its understanding and then the optimal intervention. This however is a well-spent effort as it may contribute to the well being of the societies involved in intractable conflicts and to the international community at large.
References


Bloomfield, D., Barnes, T., & Huyse, L. (Eds.) (2003). *Reconciliation after violent*


Keinon, H & Horovitz, D. (January 1, 2008). Olmert says Israel must internalize divided Jerusalem. Jerusalem Post (p.1)


emotional underpinnings of learning and involvement during presidential campaigns. *American Political Science Review, 87*, 672-685


Paez, D. (Unpublished Manuscript). Emotional responses and attitudes to the peace talks with E.T.A.


Figure 1: Process of Overcoming the Psychological Barriers and Building the Culture of Peace