

# Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution

Eran Halperin

*The School of Psychology, Interdisciplinary Center, Israel*

## Abstract

The central role played by emotions in conflict has long been recognized by many of the scholars who study ethnic conflicts and conflict resolution. Yet recent developments in the psychological study of discrete emotions and of emotion regulation have yet to receive adequate attention by those who study and seek to promote conflict resolution. At the same time, scholars of emotion and emotion regulation have only rarely tested their core theories in the context of long-term conflicts, which constitute a unique and highly emotional environment. I argue that building bridges between these two communities would help us to form a better understanding of core processes in emotion and emotion regulation as well as greatly advance theory and practice in conflict resolution. To address that goal, a theoretical, appraisal-based model elucidating the way emotions operate in the context of conflict resolution processes is presented, followed by a review of recent empirical developments in the study of discrete emotions in conflict resolution processes. Next, I discuss various avenues of influence and provide preliminary data regarding the potential role of two types of emotion regulation processes (i.e., direct and indirect) in conflict resolution efforts. Finally, I describe the future challenges in integrating these two bodies of knowledge, at both the theoretical and the applied levels.

## Keywords

conflict resolution, emotion, emotion regulation, intergroup conflicts

There are not many domains in life in which emotions are as powerful and influential as they are in long-term violent conflicts such as those in the Middle East, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Chechnya, and Rwanda. Extreme emotional phenomena, such as hatred, contempt, and humiliation, which in most aspects of our lives are considered almost illegitimate, constitute the dominant feelings held by many of those living in areas of intractable conflict. Members of these societies, who are directly or indirectly influenced by the conflict, experience these emotions very frequently and with high intensity. Consequently, they become increasingly sensitive to political and other contextual cues that can potentially induce these emotional experiences (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & de Rivera, 2007). Subsequently, these emotions fuel the continuation of such conflicts, inducing violence instead of conciliatory actions and constituting powerful psychological barriers to peaceful resolution of the conflict (Halperin, 2011; Halperin, Sharvit, & Gross, 2011).

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., Horowitz, 1985; Petersen, 2002; Staub, 2005; Volkan, 1997). Interestingly, however, empirical investigations into the nature, role, and

implications of emotions in long-term conflicts were quite rare until the last two decades. But even when scholars of conflict resolution began studying the effects of emotions on the dynamics of political conflicts and their resolution, most of them treated emotions as a monolithic package of intergroup negative affect, rather than investigating the unique contribution of discrete emotions to the continuation of conflicts. Also, most of these scholars tended to express a rather deterministic view regarding the existence and implications of intense/negative emotions in long-term conflicts. According to this view, intense/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.

Nonetheless, we have recently introduced a different approach to the study of emotion and emotion regulation in political conflicts (e.g., Halperin, Sharvit, & Gross, 2011). According to this new approach, developments in the psychological study of discrete emotions (e.g., Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), as well as the rapid developments in the growing field of emotion regulation (e.g., Gross, 2007), should be better integrated and should have more impact on the way scholars of

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*Corresponding author:* Eran Halperin, The School of Psychology, Interdisciplinary Center, Kanfei Nesharim St., Herzliya 46150, Israel. Email: eran.halperin@idc.ac.il

conflict resolution study emotions in conflicts. It is suggested that the aggregated knowledge of emotions and emotion regulation be used more extensively by those who seek to better understand conflict resolution processes, as well as by those who seek to mobilize public opinion towards more conciliatory positions and behaviors in the context of intractable conflicts.

I argue that doing so would greatly advance theory and practice in conflict resolution. But of no less importance, it will also contribute to the understanding of core processes in emotion and emotion regulation in (at least) three key ways. First, it enables an examination of the effects of emotion and emotion regulation processes on the intergroup level rather than just on the interpersonal level. Second, it enables emotion and emotion regulation scholars to examine their theories in one of the most ideologically driven, intense, and highly emotional settings and in the face of an ongoing stream of negative information and destructive events. Finally, the current framework enables the examination of the effects of emotion regulation strategies not only on affective reactions, but on political ones as well.

In what follows I present a theoretical appraisal-based framework elucidating the way discrete emotions operate in the context of conflict resolution processes. Then, I review recent theoretical and empirical developments in the study of discrete emotions in conflict resolution processes. Next, I present a model of emotion regulation in long-term conflicts, discuss various avenues of influence, and provide preliminary data regarding the potential role of emotion regulation in conflict resolution processes. Finally, I describe the future challenges in integrating these two bodies of knowledge, at both the theoretical and the applied levels.

## How Do Emotions Shape People's Political Reactions to Conflict-related Events? An Appraisal-based Framework

Before presenting the appraisal-based framework (see Figure 1), it is important to briefly describe the unique context of intractable conflict in order to understand what makes the study of emotional processes in this context so valuable. The collective context of intractable conflict should be seen as a lasting context for decades. Throughout these years, society members live under extremely high levels of perceived threat and uncertainty, and many of them face violent suffering and victimization in the most direct and personal way. Thus, the nature of the lasting context of conflict has relevance to the well-being of society members—it directly involves them, occupies a central position in public discourse and the public agenda, supplies information and experiences that compel society members to construct an adaptable worldview, is a determinative factor in the selection of lines of behaviors, continuously shapes the lives of the involved societies, and imprints upon every aspect of individual and collective life (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011).

It is under these conditions that, from time to time, society members are exposed to new events or pieces of information that can potentially pave the route to more conciliatory actions

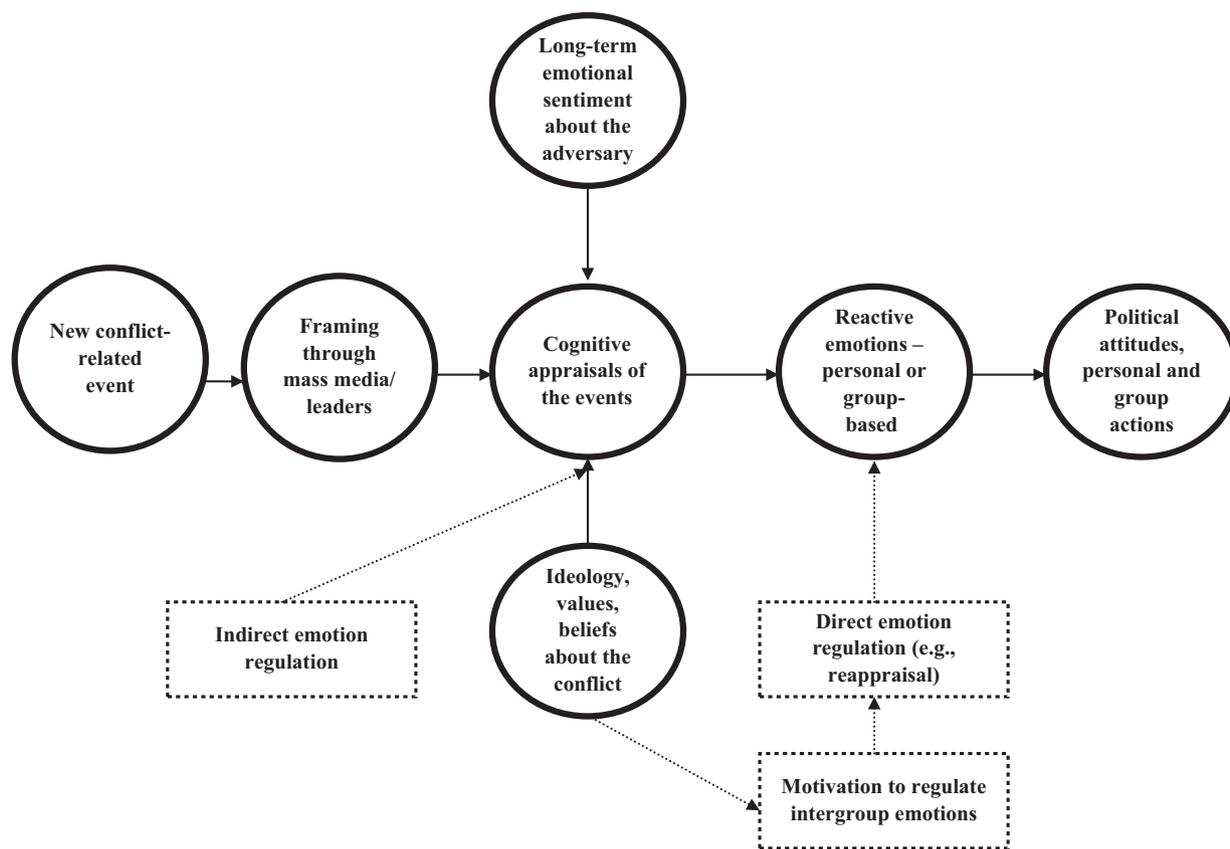
(e.g., a peace gesture, willingness to compromise). The model presented in Figure 1 demonstrates the way the political reactions to these potentially peace-promoting stimuli are shaped by the discrete emotional reactions to the event/information. In most cases in this context events are experienced directly by only a handful of group members and transmitted to other group members through the mediation of leaders, the mass media, or other individuals. In these cases, if individuals identify with the same group as the directly exposed individuals, they would experience group-based emotions (e.g., Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). When group-based emotions are targeted at social groups, they are defined as intergroup emotions (Iyer & Leach, 2008).

Such short-term events may elicit individual and group-based emotions and the ensuing political response tendencies, depending on the manner in which they are appraised. Yet in this context only part of the appraisal process is conducted inside the head of lay citizens. The event may be framed by the mass media or by the leaders in a certain way, and this framing influences individuals' appraisal of the event (Gross, 2008).

Once the new information reaches its audience, its appraisal is influenced by a relatively wide range of nonaffective dispositional factors that people involved in long-term conflicts carry with them throughout the conflict, enabling them to analyze the events through their own self-serving filters. It is only natural to assume that conflict-related events would be appraised differently by individuals adhering to different ideological views, different values, and different beliefs and narratives about the conflict and the opponent (Bar-Tal, 2013; Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Most of these factors are not taken into account when emotion generation processes are studied in a lab setting or in a more controlled environment, but they are highly influential in the context of long-term conflicts.

Finally, the appraisal-based framework assumes that long-term emotional sentiments will bias the cognitive appraisals of specific events. Sentiments represent temporally stable emotional dispositions towards a person, group, or symbol (Arnold, 1960; Frijda, 1986) and, although they can be found in any context of long-term relationships, they are extremely common in long-term conflicts, which inherently include a long history of rivalry and highly emotional events (Halperin & Gross, 2011b). In line with Lerner and Keltner's (2000) appraisal tendency framework, dominant long-term sentiment will increase the probability of their respective emotions' occurrence through the elicitation of the core appraisal themes associated with these emotions. For example, Halperin and Gross (2011b) recently found that Israelis' anger towards Palestinians during the war in Gaza were influenced, to a large extent, by Israelis' enduring sentiment of anger towards the Palestinians, measured more than a year prior to the war.

The model suggests that these three groups of factors, coupled with the occurrence of a new event that can potentially lead to either peace or conflict escalation, will shape the cognitive appraisal of the event, and this appraisal will provide the basis for the development of corresponding discrete emotions. In turn, these discrete emotions, and particularly the



**Figure 1.** An appraisal-based framework for emotions and emotion regulation in intractable conflicts (based on Halperin, Sharvit, & Gross, 2011).

emotional goals and response tendencies embedded within them, will dictate the behavioral and political responses to the event (see Halperin, 2011; Halperin, Russel, Dweck, & Gross, 2011).

### Discrete Emotions and Conflict Resolution

Although it is equally important to understand the emotional aspects of all conflict phases, the current article focuses exclusively on the role played by emotions during the de-escalation and peacemaking phase, which can also be termed the conflict resolution phase. During this stage, that can sometimes endure for years and even decades, society members move from a well-known and familiar context into an uncertain, ambiguous, and risky context. This context has many of the characteristics of conflict, while at the same time possessing characteristics of the emerging context of peace. On the one hand, signs of peacemaking appear, reflected in meetings between the rivals, coordination of some activities, moderation of violence, and so on. On the other hand, violent acts persist, conflict rhetoric continues to be employed, and most importantly, the culture of conflict remains hegemonic. As such, this stage is saturated by a mixture of negative (e.g., fear, anger, hatred) as well as positive (e.g., hope) emotions that at times hinder, while at other times stimulate, political progress towards peace.

In order to promote peace under these circumstances, the parties must possess a certain level of openness to new ideas, as well as cognitive flexibility, creativity, and the willingness to take risks (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011). These cognitive processes should be translated into behavioral tendencies focused on the motivation to communicate and interact with outgroup members and the willingness to compromise on major issues or even well-entrenched ideological beliefs and moral convictions.

Many different emotions play a role in conflict resolution processes, and providing an exhaustive overview of them all surpasses the scope of the current article. Among those that will not be dealt with, but that are important to at least mention, are empathy and guilt as potential peace catalysts, and contempt, humiliation, and even disgust as plausible barriers. In the following section, I briefly review findings from studies that have recently tested the impact of several other important emotions in promoting or hindering peace in real conflict zones, such as the Middle East, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Northern Ireland, Spain, and Cyprus.

### *Negative Emotions and Attitudes towards Peace*

On the negative end of the affective spectrum, intergroup *hatred* stands clearly as the most powerful affective barrier to peace (Staub, 2005). Hatred is driven by an appraisal of the outgroup's

harming behavior as stemming from a deep-rooted, permanent evil character (Halperin, Russel, et al., 2011; Sternberg, 2003). Accordingly, two recent studies found that individuals who experienced short-term episodes of hatred in times of negotiations in the Middle East expressed an emotional goal of harming and even eliminating the opponent (Halperin, 2008), tended to reject any positive information about the opponent, and opposed the continuation of negotiations, compromise, and reconciliation (Halperin, 2011).

Very different from hatred, the influence of other negative emotions on attitudes and behavioral intentions towards negotiations and peace is more complicated. This complexity stems mainly from the pluripotentiality of these emotions, and namely from the fact that their emotional goals can be reached through different (and sometimes even contradicting) avenues. One notable example is anger, which is usually associated with an appraisal of the outgroup's behavior as unjust and unfair, a feeling of relative ingroup strength (e.g., Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994), and an emotional goal of correcting (what they appraise as) the wrongdoing of the adversary (e.g., Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Accordingly, studies conducted in Northern Ireland and Spain have demonstrated that anger constitutes a significant emotional barrier in the face of potential compromises (Sabucedo, Durán, Alzate, & Rodríguez, 2011; Tam et al., 2007).

Under different circumstances, however, anger appears to play a highly constructive role in peace-making processes. This is mainly due to the fact that anger, as an approach emotion, is associated with a feeling of strength, and can potentially lead to risk-seeking behavior, optimistic forecasting, and a true belief in the capability to correct the situation, all of which are important requirements of a successful peace process. Accordingly, recent empirical studies have shown that under certain circumstances, anger increases support for constructive actions such as long-term reconciliation (Fischer & Roseman, 2007) and support for risk-taking in peace negotiations (e.g., compromises; Halperin, 2011; Reifen-Tagar, Federico, & Halperin, 2011). According to the existing findings, anger would lead to constructive rather than destructive consequences when the anger-inducing stimulus is followed by constructive and feasible ways of operation (Reifen-Tagar et al., 2011) and when it is not accompanied by long-term hatred (Halperin, Russel, et al., 2011). In these cases, anger constitutes a powerful engine for peace and, as such, should be seen as the opposite of despair and apathy rather than the opposite of empathy.

A similar complexity can be traced in empirical studies testing the role played by *fear*, *intergroup anxiety*, and *collective angst* in conflict resolution processes. Given fear's inhibitory nature and the avoidance tendencies associated with it, it is only natural that most conflict resolution scholars see fear as an extremely powerful barrier to peace (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2001). Indeed, studies show that experiences of threat and fear increase conservatism, prejudice, ethnocentrism, and intolerance (e.g., Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Feldman & Stenner, 1997). Other studies, in the framework of *terror management theory*, show that an existential threat leads to more right-wing inclinations and

less compromising political tendencies (e.g., Hirschberger & Pyszczynski, 2010). More specific to the negotiation process itself, fear and collective angst lead to the strengthening of ingroup ties (Wohl, Branscombe, & Reysen, 2010), risk-averse political tendencies, and concrete objection to negotiation (Sabucedo et al., 2011). Additionally, intergroup anxiety reduces motivation for intergroup contact, thus hindering another important avenue to the promotion of peaceful resolution of conflicts (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

At the same time, however, it is critical to bear in mind that, very differently from hatred, the emotional goal associated with fear is to decrease levels of threat, rather than to simply hurt the outgroup (see Halperin, 2008). Hence, fear can potentially promote, rather than hinder, peace to the extent that people believe that peace can contribute to their personal and collective security and that the risks embedded within the peace process are lower than the risks contained in rejecting the potential security that can be achieved if the process succeeds. Given this, it is not surprising that a handful of recent studies have shown a positive association between collective fear, or angst, and the willingness to make compromises for peace (see Gayer, Tal, Halperin, & Bar-Tal, 2009; Halperin, Russel, et al., 2011). In all of these studies, compromises are seen by participants as the most efficient way to reduce risks, and increased fear thus contributes to more conciliatory positions.

### *Positive Emotions and Attitudes towards Negotiation and Peace*

Although historically the core focus of studies regarding emotions in conflict has been on the role of negative rather than positive emotions, a handful of recent studies provide a snapshot into the way in which positive emotions can promote support for negotiations and peace. For example, Sabucedo et al. (2011) studied the effects of the emotional reactions of Spanish citizens to their government's declaration of its intention to enter into a peace process with the terrorist group ETA, on their attitudes towards peace negotiation. They found that enthusiasm increased support for negotiations, even when ideological and other negative emotions were controlled for. Enthusiasm regarding the process can potentially reduce risk assessments and induce a more optimistic view regarding the negotiations' potential outcomes.

Such an optimistic view is closely related to another positive emotion that plays a key role in conflict resolution processes: *hope*. Hope facilitates goal setting, planning, use of imagery, creativity, cognitive flexibility, mental exploration of novel situations, and even risk-taking (Snyder, 1994). Consequently, hope allows members of groups that are involved in violent conflicts to imagine a future that is different from the past and come up with creative solutions to the disputes at the core of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2001). The belief that a peaceful resolution is possible is an essential step towards taking risks and compromising. Indeed, a study conducted in Northern Ireland found that hope was positively related to the dissipation of the desire to retaliate, which, in turn, was positively related to the willingness to forgive the

adversary (Moeschberger, Dixon, Niens, & Cairns, 2005). Another study in which the effects of hope on support for making compromises in the Middle East were assessed, showed that hope led to an increase in Israelis' support for compromises in peace negotiations (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp & Gross, 2013).

## Emotion Regulation as a Conflict Resolution Strategy

As presented earlier, the extensive growth in the study of emotions in general, and emotions in conflicts in particular, has led to the realization that discrete intergroup emotions can play a critical role in the dynamics of intergroup conflicts. An important question, therefore, and one that has been at the heart of our research in recent years, is whether and how intergroup emotions can be effectively regulated so as to reduce aggression, promote more conciliatory positions, and pave the way to conflict resolution. From the perspective of emotion regulation scholars, by addressing this question we also deal with several important issues that have rarely been discussed in the literature, such as: To what extent can emotion regulation strategies such as reappraisal influence intergroup emotions, and not just intrapersonal ones? To what extent can these strategies shape not only affective reactions, but political ones as well? And finally, to what extent can these strategies be effective in an environment saturated by extreme, negative intergroup emotions, strong ideologies, and long-term rivalries?

An attempt to regulate, or to encourage emotion regulation among others, can be done in various ways and at different times throughout the emotion generation process (Gross, 1998; Gross, Richards, & John, 2006). But how exactly can this be done in the context of intractable conflicts when people face dramatic events that can potentially induce powerful negative emotions? Based on a slightly nuanced version of the previously made distinction between explicit or implicit emotion regulation (Bargh & Williams, 2007; Mauss, Bunge, & Gross, 2007), I suggest two possible strategies that may assist those who wish to promote conflict resolution (see dotted lines in Figure 1).

First, I argue that contemporary knowledge about the nature and political implications of discrete emotions can help conflict-resolution scholars and practitioners to form more focused, emotion-based interventions that hold the potential to promote peace. By utilizing *indirect (or implicit) regulation strategies*, those interested in understanding and promoting peace can form dedicated interventions aimed at altering concrete cognitive appraisals, thus changing public opinion about peace by changing people's discrete emotions. In these interventions, the target audience is not trained or asked directly to regulate their emotions, but instead they are exposed to concrete messages aimed at altering specific cognitive appraisals and in turn also to change the associated emotions. These interventions are aimed at prospectively changing upcoming appraisals, hence they appear prior to the actual emotional experience and, due to their indirect nature, do not require motivation to regulate.

Second, a more *direct emotion regulation* approach suggests that traditional and effective emotion regulation strategies, such as *cognitive reappraisal*, can be used in conflict situations in order to change people's intergroup emotional experiences, and subsequently their political positions as well. In a typical training of such direct (or explicit) emotion regulation, the target audience members are presented with a task that involves processing stimuli and are trained to regulate their emotional responses (regulation trial) using a strategy specified by the researcher (or trainer). The underlying assumption of this approach is that by directly training individuals to regulate their negative emotions, one can potentially modulate their future emotional and political reactions to conflict-related events. As seen in Figure 1, this strategy requires not just emotion regulation knowledge or capability, but also a motivation to regulate under specific circumstances. In the following sections, the two approaches are briefly described, elucidated, and demonstrated (see also the dotted lines in Figure 1).

### *Promoting Conflict Resolution by Utilizing Indirect Regulation Strategies*

Indirect emotion regulation refers to attempts to change people's core appraisals that are associated with emotions considered powerful barriers to peace, by conveying concrete messages. In a typical in-lab experimental design this can be done, for example, by exposing participants to text that was supposedly published in a highly prestigious scientific journal and that emphasizes a target cognitive appraisal. Outside the lab, these messages can be conveyed to those involved in intractable conflict through the education system (e.g., Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009), dialogue groups (e.g., Maoz, 2011), mass media, or even drama shows or soap operas (e.g., Paluck, 2009).

Interestingly, when reading through the rationale and mission statements of most Track 2 and 3 conflict resolution programs (e.g., peace education programs, dialogue groups), one can frequently find ideas like reducing intergroup hatred, fear, and anger, and promoting intergroup empathy and hope, among their main goals. These expressions demonstrate the oversimplified view of emotions in some of these circles. This is mainly because conflict resolution strategies that treat all negative emotions in a monolithic way can be at best ineffective, and at times even counterproductive. Hence, in recent years we have developed a unique approach offering much more focused emotion-based interventions.

The first step is to tie the intervention's main goal with a discrete emotional phenomenon. For example, based on our accumulated knowledge we know that promoting support for tangible compromises can be accomplished by reducing hatred and fear, while inducing anger or hope to effectively promote risk taking. Next, the core appraisals of these respective emotions are defined as the key target of the intervention, and in the final step an appropriate, well-established intervention is used in order to alter these core appraisals.

One example of this "reverse engineering"-based process is demonstrated in a study conducted recently by my colleagues

and I in Israel and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Čehajić-Clancy, Effron, Halperin, Liberman, & Ross, 2011). The aim of this study was to increase the willingness of Jewish-Israelis and Serbs to support reparation policies to their respective victimized groups. The first step was to identify, based on prior research (e.g., Branscombe & Doosje, 2004; Brown, Gonzalez, Zagefka, Manzi, & Čehajić, 2008), *group-based guilt* as the single most effective emotion that can potentially promote such a goal. Then, we relied on other prior studies (e.g., Čehajić & Brown, 2008) to point to the acknowledgment of the ingroup's responsibility as the core appraisal theme of group-based guilt, and searched for a proper manipulation that would induce such an appraisal. The simple manipulation of *self-affirmation* (Steele, 1988) adequately served that goal. The results demonstrated that in both contexts, affirming a positive aspect of the self can increase one's willingness to acknowledge ingroup responsibility for wrongdoings against others, express feelings of group-based guilt, and consequently provide greater support for reparation policies (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011).

Another interesting example for the utilization of the same approach can be found in a study we recently conducted in Cyprus, with the aim of inducing the motivation of Turkish Cypriots to engage in contact with Greek Cypriots (Halperin, et al., 2012). Again, we first identified *intergroup anxiety* as the emotion that has the widest influence on people's motivation for intergroup contact (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). In a search for intergroup anxiety's core appraisal themes, we then realized that intergroup anxiety in intractable conflict is driven by a combination of two appraisals: (a) the outgroup repeatedly hurt the ingroup, and (b) the outgroup will never change and so they will try to hurt the ingroup during every encounter in the future. Then, in a search for a simple manipulation that addresses these appraisals, we adopted ideas suggested by the literature on implicit theories (e.g., Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

According to that literature, making people believe that group characteristics are malleable (vs. fixed) can reduce stereotypes (Rydell, Hugenberg, Ray, & Mackie, 2007) and increase motivation to compromise in intergroup conflict (Halperin, Russel, et al., 2011). We speculated that such a belief change would also reduce intergroup anxiety by creating expectations for less threatening behavior by the (already-changed) outgroup. Indeed, the results showed that Turkish Cypriots who were led to believe that groups can change (with no mention of the specific groups involved) reported lower levels of intergroup anxiety and higher motivation to interact and communicate with Greek Cypriots in the future, compared to those who were led to believe that groups cannot change.

### *Direct Regulation Strategies: Promoting Conciliatory Attitudes by Using Effective Emotion Regulation Strategies*

Another potentially efficient use of contemporary psychological knowledge on emotions to enrich the conflict resolution field is the use of well-established emotion regulation strategies as an educational tool aimed at promoting peace. One strategy that

has received considerable empirical attention is cognitive reappraisal. Cognitive reappraisal involves changing the meaning of a situation so as to change the person's emotional response to the situation (Gross, 2007). Empirical evidence suggests that people who used reappraisal more frequently to regulate their emotions reported significantly less negative emotions and showed more adaptive patterns of physiological responding (e.g., Mauss et al., 2007). Reappraisal has also been found to decrease aggression (Barlett & Anderson, 2011).

The first correlational evidence that reappraisal is associated with conciliatory attitudes was found in a study conducted by Halperin and Gross (2011a) in the midst of a war between Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza. In this study, using a nationwide survey ( $N = 200$ ) of Jewish-Israeli adults, we tested whether individual differences in the use of reappraisal were associated with different reactions during times of war. Interestingly, we found that Israelis who tended to use reappraisal more frequently to down-regulate their negative emotions during the war were more supportive of providing humanitarian aid to Palestinian citizens.

In a more recent study we (Halperin, Porat, Tamir, & Gross, 2013) provided reappraisal training (or not—control group) to participants ( $N = 60$ ) 1 week prior to a real, dramatic political event (the Palestinian United Nations bid), and then measured emotional and political reactions to the event 1 week, as well as 5 months, after the event. The results showed that participants who were trained to reappraise (vs. not) showed greater support for conciliatory political policies towards Palestinians even 5 months after their training, and that these effects were mediated by the experience of intergroup anger. Together, these studies provide preliminary supportive evidence for our predictions, demonstrating that regulating emotions effectively by using reappraisal can lead to decreased negative intergroup emotion as well as to increased support for conciliatory rather than aggressive policies towards the rival group. These findings are provocative and intriguing due to the fact that political positions in conflict situations are considered rigid, well entrenched, and driven mainly by ideological rather than emotional considerations.

Yet we should bear in mind the fact that reappraisal training can be effective mostly for those who are motivated to engage in emotion regulation (Tamir, 2009). It is not unrealistic to suggest that in many conflict situations, people are not motivated to down-regulate negative intergroup emotions, and at times they even prefer to experience higher levels of these emotions. According to the instrumental approach to emotion regulation (e.g., Bonanno, 2001; Tamir, 2009), people are motivated to experience emotions to the extent that these emotions offer instrumental benefits. As suggested in Figure 1, in the context of intractable conflicts, the motivation to regulate (or not to regulate) emotions can be driven by ideological beliefs as well as by beliefs about potential costs and benefits of such regulation in terms of the ingroup's position regarding the conflict and negotiation.

Consistent with this idea, Cameron and Payne (2011) demonstrated that people who think that feeling intense emotions in

response to mass suffering would lead to undesirable personal consequences were more motivated to initiate emotion regulation in an attempt to reduce the intensity of their emotional experiences. We (Wayne, Porat, Halperin, & Tamir, 2012) have recently demonstrated that Israelis' ideological conviction, as well as their general beliefs and sentiments towards Palestinians, highly influenced their motivation to down-regulate negative emotions in the face of a Palestinian peace proposal. Future studies should delve more deeply into the interrelations among ideology, motivation, regulation capabilities, and actual positions.

## A Bridge Over Troubled Water: Main Challenges in Future Research and Practice

Although the study of emotions and emotion regulation in conflicts is incrementally developing, there is still a long way to go before the potential embedded within the integration of these two fields can be fully utilized. One pivotal challenge on the way towards achieving this goal is to knit together several communities of scholars, educating conflict scholars about the potential contribution of the study of emotion and emotion regulation, and educating emotion scholars about conflict studies. Among emotion scholars, it is not uncommon to see those who are apprehensive towards research conducted outside the laboratory and especially in such uncontrolled environments. Among conflict resolution scholars, on the other hand, one can still identify general biases against the emotional approach. Upon bridging these interdisciplinary gaps, scholars of both fields would face some theoretical, empirical, and applied challenges that are described in the following section.

### *Theoretical and Empirical Challenges for the Scientific Communities*

The first challenge for those who seek to study emotion in conflicts is to move beyond the "immediate suspects" in terms of the emotions that are being studied. While numerous studies examined the role of anger, fear (e.g., Cheung-Blunden & Blunden, 2008; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003), and moral emotions (e.g., Branscombe & Doosje, 2004; Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011) in conflict situations, empirical research studying the role of other relevant emotions such as despair, contempt, and hatred is not as common and definitely does not mirror these emotions' dominance in conflict zones.

The same principle of going beyond the most common and most studied emotions should be applied to the selection of the emotion regulation strategies studied. While most studies on emotion regulation in conflicts have so far utilized cognitive reappraisal as the sole emotion regulation strategy, other emotion regulation strategies such as suppression, or even situation selection, might be relevant and should be studied in this context.

Finally, an important theoretical and empirical challenge for scholars from both communities is to adjust current knowledge regarding effective regulatory processes to the unique

characteristics of societies involved in long-term, intractable conflict. An attempt to regulate negative emotions among those who are, on the one hand, absolutely convinced in the justness of their ideological goals and, on the other hand, suffer from repeated events of personal and collective trauma, deserves a nuanced theoretical and empirical treatment. In this regard, the suggested model and findings constitute the first baby steps of a much larger scholarly endeavor.

### *From the Lab to the Field: Future Challenges in Implementing a New Approach*

Extending our understanding regarding the role and dynamics of emotional processes in conflicts is an admirable goal. Yet the ultimate goal of such a scientific endeavor should definitely be to contribute to the actual resolution of these destructive conflicts. Hence, the "million dollar question" is how we can use emotion regulation knowledge to mobilize public opinion for peace, or how we can increase the scale and scope of the existing emotion regulation strategies. The simplest answer to these questions lies in the intersection between research and education, or in this case peace education. Peace education programs should focus on more concrete messages, based on scientific knowledge about the implications of discrete emotions and the way to change them by altering their core appraisal themes (i.e., indirect emotion regulation). Simultaneously, other programs can teach efficient emotion regulation strategies and connect them to emotional experiences during conflict-related events. This can be suitable to situations in which explicit reference to promoting peace is not welcomed in the political and societal atmosphere, thus more indirect strategies, in which the actual conflict is rarely mentioned, are more feasible (see Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009).

Finally, huge potential for disseminating these ideas is embedded within media channels in general and the social media more specifically. Some efforts have been made in recent years to use media channels to reduce prejudice and promote peace (e.g., Paluck, 2009). New technological developments and the huge popularity of the new social media create a fertile ground for building new bridges that may assist people to regulate their negative emotions in the midst of long-term conflicts. Such regulation, as seen in the studies reviewed in this article can help in forming more constructive reactions and potentially promoting more conciliatory policies with the aim of ending the conflict.

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