Chapter 11
Lay Psychology of Trust/Distrust and Beyond in the Context of an Intractable Conflict: The Case of Israeli Jews

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One of the most essential psychological factors that determine to a considerable extent the nature of relations between human beings is trust with its antonym distrust. Both factors affect the relations on the interpersonal as well as on intra-group and intergroup levels, determining whether the relations will be liked or disliked, supportive or antagonistic, cooperative or confrontational in nature; whether there will be amity or hostility; whether conflicts will be resolved or will continue, and so on. It is becoming obvious that "...without trust, the everyday social life we take for granted is simply not possible" (Good 1988, 32). Thus, people prefer to live without distrust as it often leads to discomfort, suspicion, threats, and hostility. Trust and distrust are psychological elements that denote a subjective feeling that one has toward another person, leader, leadership, system, institution, organization, or another group. Therefore, it is not surprising that both are well-recognized concepts in all social sciences. Both of them have to be taken into consideration when social systems are analyzed from the micro level to the most macro levels in every domain.

Researchers who study this phenomenon have provided a number of definitions and we will note just some of them to get acquainted with the ways researchers
view them. Deutsch (1960), as one of the first social psychologists who studied trust, defined it as “considerable confidence in a positive outcome” (p. 124). Sztoompka, who devoted much of his sociological career to the study of this construct, defined it as “a bet about the future contingent actions of others” (Sztoompka 1999, 25); Lewicki (2006) viewed it as “positive confident expectation regarding another’s conduct” (p. 97). Gambetta (1988) defined trust as occurring in a situation in which “the probability that someone will perform an action that is beneficial or at least not detrimental to us is high enough for us to consider engaging in some form of cooperation with him” (p. 217). Hardin (2004) clarified that “we trust you because we think you take our interests to heart and encapsulate our interests in your own” (p. 5). Barber (1983) proposed that trust is the expectation of the persistence and fulfillment of the natural and the moral order.

Most of these researchers went further to differentiate between various types of trust and distrust, but in our view the most interesting and accepted division is between trust that is based on instrumental-calculated considerations and trust that is based on relational—genuine foundations. The former, also called predictive trust, is based on cold calculations of interests of the other party, including intentions and goals which, under certain conditions lead to risk-taking behavior because the party decides that under the particular circumstance it can trust the other party. In this case, with the focus on the outcome, the person takes a risk that the other side will perform certain behaviors according to the expectations. The latter, called often fiduciary, is based on positive interpersonal or intergroup ongoing relations that two parties have, and trust is an outcome of this relationship that is imbued with at least some level of care and liking. This trust that focuses on the other party is based on the positive view of, and affect toward the other, and on believing that the other party has a genuine interest in the well-being of the trusting party.

Analyzing the above-presented definitions, we conclude that they all have the following characteristics: (a) They all pertain to a belief that a party has toward a human entity—that is, either the entity itself, like another person, a leader or a group (small group, larger group, or a society), or an entity that is activated by humans, like an organization or other social systems. (b) This belief can differ on the dimensions of confidence and centrality. The former refers to the extent to which a party is confident about its trust or distrust regarding the specific other party, and the latter concerns the level of accessibility in a person’s mind and the extent to which it is considered in various decisions that a person makes. (c) The definitions pertain to the expectations that a party has regarding some kind of outcome—either positive or negative. (d) Beliefs about trust or distrust have emotional and behavioral implications—that is, trust and distrust lead to certain attitudes, emotions, and behaviors, as well as to additional beliefs. Trust, thus, leads to positive feelings and approaching behaviors, while distrust leads to negative feelings and avoidance behaviors. (e) The beliefs about trust and distrust can be elicited automatically and spontaneously or can be based on information
processing, calculations, and other controlled cognitive processes. Automatic trust is often elicited in cases of relational—genuine trust, while the alternative process can be found more often in instrumental and calculated trust which requires more considerations. (f) Trust in most cases is not generalized, but differs across areas and situations. That means that parties differentiate among different areas—and trust the other parties regarding one or several areas—in cases of relational—genuine trust there is more generalization and it is even possible to observe total trust, in which the parties have trust in the other entity in all areas of life. (g) Trust and distrust are learned on the basis of one’s own experiences and/or information provided by other trusted sources. And (h) trust and distrust are usually not stable and may change over time. A party may even move from a position of trust to distrust toward the same entity as well as in the opposite direction.

Of special importance is the fact that there are shared beliefs about trust by group or society members, because they live under the same geopolitical conditions and are exposed to similar information and experiences, as well as go through similar institutional socialization. Also, individuals are group members who identify with their group and because of this identification, form shared views of the world (Turner et al. 1987). The fact that group or society members share a belief of trust or distrust toward another group is of significance in intergroup relations and especially in conflict situations. Distrust in the intergroup conflict is a driving force that not only leads to negative attitudes, emotions, intentions, and behaviors, but also prevents peaceful conflict resolution, because without minimal trust it is impossible to carry out acts of peacemaking.

This point about distrust in a violent and prolonged conflict brings us to state the goals of this chapter. In principle, we are interested in exploring the functioning of trust and distrust in situations of conflict and especially in the intergroup conflict between Israeli Jews and Palestinians, which is perceived as a prototypical intractable conflict. But, we also provide a new view of trust as seen by lay people involved in intractable conflict. Since trust is a subjective belief held by human beings, who differ in their views—because of their particular experiences and learnings—we focus on the views of lay people, Israeli Jews, who were interviewed about their views of trust and distrust and then asked to apply these views to the analysis of Jewish–Palestinian relations. Thus, we first provide the interviewees’ definitions of trust and distrust, and subsequently we analyze the meaning of trust and distrust on this basis. In the next part, we focus on trust and distrust in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as seen by Israeli Jews. In this part, we first present the views of Israeli Jews and later, based on the findings, we continue

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1 Intractable conflicts are violent, fought over goals, viewed as existential, perceived as being of zero-sum nature and unsolvable, preoccupy a central position in the lives of the involved societies, require immense investments of material and psychological resources and last for at least 25 years (Bar-Tal 2007, 2013; Kriesberg 1998).
to elaborate on the meaning of trust and distrust in the context of intractable conflict. Finally, we present a few ideas regarding the possibility of changing distrust to trust, in order to advance peacemaking processes.

**Lay Psychology of Trust and Distrust**

One of the key questions is how lay people view various phenomena, because they as individuals and also as society members act in correspondence with their views. Thus, the study of the views society members hold helps one to understand not only how they view the phenomenon, but also the epistemic basis of their behavior. This assumption led us to carry out a study among Israeli Jews about their view of trust regarding Palestinians, because it has been a key determinant of their relations. Lack of trust has prevented progress in the peacemaking process, as demonstrated in other chapters in this book. Almost all the studies that were carried out using surveys show that Israeli Jews have a very low level of trust toward Arabs in general, and toward Palestinians in particular (see the chapter by Yaar in this book). In contrast to the prevailing line of research that used surveys as a research method, we decided to penetrate deep into the cognitive repertoire of Israeli Jews by carrying out in-depth interviews, in order to understand not only their view of trust and distrust, but also their wide outlook on their view of distrust regarding relations with Palestinians.

The study, conducted between the years 2010–2011, included a heterogeneous sample of participants—17 men and 15 women, ranging in age from 29 to 80, and espousing a variety of political views (53.2% right wing and 46.8% left wing). All participants were Jewish-Israeli, secular, and living in the central region of Israel. Participants were interviewed in-depth using a semi-structured interview protocol designed for this study. Questions bore on the definitions of trust and distrust, degree of trust in another group, and especially on trust-building and attitudes of trust toward Arabs, Palestinians, Syrians, Jordanians, and Egyptians.

Interviews were qualitatively analyzed for content and emerging themes related to the concept of trust. The study therefore accessed an understanding of a broad set of views that participants espouse. Finally, several statistical analyses were conducted in order to draw comparisons between the various Arab groups regarding the degree of trust they are afforded by Israeli Jews, as well as between participants with different political views.

First, let us examine how participants defined trust and distrust, and how these definitions differ from those constructed by social scientists.

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2In this chapter we report only partial results and focus merely on the views of trust towards the Palestinians. A detailed description of the study and all the results can be found in Shapira (2013).
Definitions

Trust

The majority of participants (75%) defined trust as counting on someone else to carry out good deeds. For example, one participant’s definition of trust was: “How do I define trust? Someone says something, I believe them, I take them at their word, and it proved itself, it happened on some level or another.” Analysis of the different responses makes it clear that participants talked about different kinds of good behavior that promote trust. Trust in someone else’s good behavior was also defined in terms of their good intentions. One participant said: “...that I trust them, that all-in-all they want what’s best for me.” These findings lend support to the theoretical claim that trust is confidence in the other’s intentions (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994), and the expectation that the other is well intentioned (Baier 1986). This view is in line with the argument that trust in another person increases insofar as one believes in this person’s positive intentions and motives toward the self (Lewicki and Wiethoff Lewicki and Wiethoff 2000; Tyler 2003). Moreover, some participants discussed keeping promises and fulfilling expectations as trust-promoting. For example, one participant defined trust as follows: “When someone trusts somebody else to do everything they want... when you ask something of someone, that they’ll do it. That they’ll fulfill the expectations.” And another participant also said: “Trust, how do I define it? Someone promises me something and they keep it.” These ideas are in accordance with the notion that trust includes positive expectations regarding others’ intentions and (Kramer 1999; Lewicki and McAllister 1998).

Additionally, under the theme of trust as confidence in good conduct, several participants described trust as the belief that another person will maintain or look after their interests. Yet, about half of the participants defined trust as the possibility of counting on someone else not to behave negatively. For example, one participant said: “Trusting her, for me, means that she won’t do anything to harm me, that I can count on her with my eyes closed.” In other words, the view of trust that emerges is one based on expectations for both action and inaction: what one expects others to do, as well as to refrain from doing. Finally, another definition of trust is the foundation of a positive relationship and understanding (31.25% of participants).

Distrust

Most participants (81.25%) defined distrust as suspiciousness, or thinking that the other person may do harm or lie. One participant spoke about his relationship with a person he does not trust: “I don’t stop being friends with him, but I don’t believe his promises. I can’t count on him.” Another participant claimed that “distrust is when everything can be doubted. Every word needs to be checked to see if it’s true or not.
Everything is doubted.” And another participant said: “I don’t trust what he says, there’s a need to verify everything he says, where he’s fibbing, where he’s lying to me, his interests. You can’t take things at face value.” A small proportion of participants (6.25%) indicated that distrust is the inability to count on another person to behave well. Distrust, therefore, expresses concerns of possible harm by another—an expectation for hurtful behavior and for absence of helpful behavior.

**Intergroup Relations**

Based on this analysis of the concepts of trust and distrust, the question arises of whether these concepts can be applied to the understanding of intergroup relations. The vast majority of participants (80%) indicated that trust or distrust of another group is possible, which suggests that these concepts may be applicable in an intergroup context, as one participant said, for example: “Yes. Groups unfortunately fight each other, are enemies towards each other, so obviously sometimes there is no trust between them.” In contrast, two participants claimed that trust or distrust cannot exist between groups. For example: “Generalizing trust to an entire group? It’s hard for me to believe and I don’t think that’s ever been proven, a situation where an entire group can’t be trusted.”

It is interesting to note that 28.13% of participants considered intergroup trust to be largely instrumental, as described by Hoffman (2002) and Tyler (2003). For instance, one participant said that she “think[s] that between groups it’s first and foremost a matter of common interests that are primarily economic. Then, if the interests are the same interests, you can build relationships of trust...” One participant said that “even the special relationship between Israel and the United States is based on interests... I don’t have so much trust in the United States. I think they have interests.” Another participant spoke about Egyptians: “They are at peace with us for their own needs. I don’t like it. If you’re concerned about your own interests then you can’t be my friend.” Only 6.25% of participants suggested that intergroup trust can be genuine and include warm relationships, as claimed by Larson (1997).

Next, participants were asked what promotes trust in another group. The findings suggest that 40.63% of participants indicated that positive behavior by members of the other group promotes trust in that group. Others (31.25%) mentioned that common interests and cooperation lead to greater trust between groups. Some (31.25%) suggested that for trust to be built between groups, contact between them is necessary. Yet others (31.25%) identified the central source for intergroup trust in the groups’ leadership. That is the behavior of leaders and then the trust in them determines the intergroup trust. A small proportion of the sample (18.75%) claimed that similarity between groups brings them closer and promotes greater trust between them. Understanding the other side and being open to them are yet another factor suggested by a minority of participants (15.63%). A few of the participants (15.63%) said that a group’s positive image may lead to greater trust in
that group. Others mentioned trust-building mechanisms (9.38 %) or external conditions (6.25 %) as influencing the degree of intergroup trust.

As for generating distrust in another group, most of the participants (68.75 %) identified negative behavior of members of the other group as leading to distrust in that group. About forty percent (40.63 %) claimed that relations of distrust are the result of the groups’ respective leadership. A small proportion (31.25 %) suggested that a group’s negative image generates greater distrust in that group. Some (18.75 %) suggested that distrust stems from differences between groups, and a similar proportion identified education as a primary reason for intergroup distrust, claiming that such distrust is the result of a society that teaches children to espouse negative attitudes toward another group. A few participants (3.13 %) identified external conditions as the cause of intergroup distrust.

On the basis of these observed responses and other proposed definitions by social scientists, we propose that trust/distrust refers directly to cognitive and behavioral elements. It basically refers to beliefs that concern lasting expectations about future behaviors of the other that affect one’s own welfare and allow or do not allow readiness to take risk in various (may be particular) lines of behaviors. Focusing on the other group, in the case of trust, the definition refers to the lasting expectations about future behaviors of the other (another group) that affect one’s own welfare (welfare of one’s own group) and allow readiness to take risk in various (may be particular) lines of behaviors. In the case of distrust, the definition refers to the lasting expectations about future behaviors of the other (another group) that affect one’s own welfare (welfare of one’s own group) and does not allow readiness to take risk in various (may be particular) lines of behaviors. The expectations about future behaviors of the other can have different valence—that is, one can have positive or negative expectations about the intentional behavior (or behavior only) of the other that may impact one’s own welfare: expectations about beneficiary behavior or harmful behavior. A lack of positive expectations does not necessarily imply the presence of negative expectations; just as the lack of negative expectations does not automatically imply the presence of positive expectations. Rather, positive and negative expectations constitute two separate dimensions of trust.

Thus, in deconstructing this definition, we believe that the essence of the trust/distrust reflects expectations about future behaviors of the other group. The expectations are about what the other group would do in the foreseen future and not about what the other group would like to do. Thus, we differentiate between perceived foreseen behavior of the other group and the perceived behavior that the other group may wish to carry out. Obviously, trusting or distrusting does not appear dichotomously—it is a dimensional characteristic that is reflected in the level of expectations and consequently, in the level of the willingness to take risks. Nevertheless, we recognize that perceived desirable goals also affect the level of expectations that the group has. The expectations are about the intentional behaviors of the other group that have an effect on the welfare (well-being) of the ingroup. This part of the definition indicates that the expectations refer to behaviors that the other group intends to carry out (plans and implements) and that have
implications for the well-being of the ingroup. These intentions do not include deep wishes that the other group may have. We are referring to the perceived intentions of carrying out an expected behavior. Also, expectations refer to behaviors that the other group has the capability to carry out. Trust may be reduced if the other group is incapable of carrying out particular behaviors and in the case of distrust, a group may take more risk when it believes that the other side cannot perform negative behaviors that it would like to carry out.

We also recognize that expectations may be generalized or relate to a particular set of behaviors in specific domains and circumstances. Thus, for example, we may trust a party in a particular domain and not trust it in other domains. We may also trust a party in particular circumstances, while not in other circumstances. This factor refers to the scope of trust, as opposed to its intensity. The perception of a group as a homogenous entity might moderate the scope with which one generalizes trust or distrust to that group.

We further believe that such expectations are lasting, which means that they have some level of stability. Expectations are about consistent and continuous behaviors of the other group, at least for some foreseen future. We do not refer to sporadic and easily changeable expectations. But, on the other hand, we recognize that these expectations are dynamic and that they change as a result of changing evaluations (attribution of characteristics) of the other group and/or changing conditions. It is also widely accepted that it is easier to break trust and move to distrust than to build trust after distrust.

The final part is the core of trust and distrust expectations that one has regarding the other. People carry their behaviors on the basis of the expectations they have. Expectations determine the level of risk that the party is ready to take. In the case of distrust, expectations imply that the group cannot take risks in the lines of behaviors that it carries out. In contrast, in the case of trust, expectations imply that the ingroup can take risks in the lines of behaviors that it carries out. Expectations, thus, lead to particular courses of action and determine the level of vulnerability that one is ready to take in relations with the other. In some way, trust amounts to the readiness to take the risk of being vulnerable to the other side’s actions, based on the expectation that the other side will carry out a specific action that carries importance to the trust giver, regardless of his ability to monitor or control the other side. This premise amounts to the kind of expected probability that one has about the type of behaviors that the other may take. This aspect is of importance, as it differentiates the concept of distrust/trust from mere characteristics that one attributes to the other (for example delegitimization). It is intimately related to the range of behaviors that can follow on the basis of expectations.

The above analysis implies that trust allows the following: Living with a particular conviction that enables a good feeling about the other; it allows avoidance of particular behaviors—for example armament—as a result of risk-taking; it allows carrying out particular behaviors—reduction of the army—risk-taking; it allows vulnerability and flexibility of actions. Distrust, in turn, forces living with a particular conviction that generates bad feelings and suspicion about the other, living in a continuous state of threat, living under conditions of preparedness for being
harmed (stress), living in continuous readiness to absorb information about potential harm, which forces one to avoid particular behaviors (e.g., showing weakness, vulnerability)—avoiding creative and original behaviors of good will toward the other, which forces one to carry out particular behaviors (e.g., deterrence, demonstration of strength), and using routinized behaviors.

Now we will return to the study and report the views of trust and distrust of Israeli Jews in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Perceptions of Relations with the Palestinian People

The majority of the participants (80%) mentioned having some degree of distrust in the Palestinian people, and only 20% indicated having trust in them. This distrust was expressed predominantly toward Hamas: 58% expressed the belief that the organization aspires to claim the entire land of Israel and to exterminate a considerable part of the Jewish population (Shamir 2007). Here are some illustrative quotes:

"I don’t believe in them, because the Palestinians are among us, they slept among us, and they did all those terror attacks here, exploding on buses with children, women, and kids. My God." “The Palestinian people, if we define them as a people… In light of the number of agreements with them that collapsed, and in my opinion that was mostly their fault, I believe in them less. A lot less”. “Of course, distrust… Due to the fact that to this day they still educate to hate. To the return to Ramla, and Jaffa, and Acco, and all those places.” “I have fear, that doesn’t go well with trust. I have fear, I was there during the time of terror attacks, I’m still scared, scared of being hated, and I know some of them hate me.”

An examination of these responses reveals that starting with the first question, some of the participants not only disclosed distrust of Palestinians, but also put forth arguments regarding the reasons—attacks on Jews, violation of agreements, education for hatred, and hate expressed for Jews. Furthermore, a majority of participants (59.38%) identified the behaviors of the Palestinians as the reason for their distrust in them. A large part of the sample mentioned that Palestinians’ behavior, such as hurting Jews and murdering them has brought about this distrust. Some (25%) said that their distrust stems from the actions of the Palestinian leadership. A small number of participants (15.63%) expressed distrust in Palestinians based on negative attitudes that they have toward them (prejudice or a negative stereotype). Two participants suggested the notion that distrust is a result of the conflict itself, and one participant described how personal experiences of harm made her distrust Palestinians.

"Some don’t recognize us, and those who don’t, it’s clear what they want. They don’t want us here". “Because of their leadership, and religious zealots everywhere, here too, the religious radicals, and I think they have a tone of religious fanaticism, the Palestinians”. “There are the Palestinians who live in Gaza, I believe in them less… Because that’s where Hamas is. But in Judea and Samaria there are Palestinians who want to talk with us". 

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Their leader wasn’t there to respond to offers or express his opinion. Once Arafat, and once Abu Mazen”. “We label people into certain categories, and it’s hard to put all that aside after we labeled them”. “Here we have a very difficult situation of hatred and killing between two groups for a very long time. This one says I deserve everything. And this one says I deserve everything”. “How they handle themselves, and act with violence and aggression, like, how they treat people and the police, and how they pollute the environment, that entire view is so far away from me, it’s repulsive to me and of course, it also scares me. Lots of times, I would just be sitting on the beach with a friend, and two-three Arabs would sit behind us and just start harassing us right away”.

Nonetheless, there were a number of participants who mentioned having some trust in Palestinians, or at least made some distinction in their regard for the Palestinian people, not willing to see the group as one monolith. Those participants who expressed trust in Palestinians claimed that this view is grounded in a humanistic worldview, and based on Palestinians’ actual behavior.

Moreover, a small minority took the adversary’s perspective, and addressed the question from that perspective. Here are some examples for such responses: “In the Palestinians themselves I have no distrust. I have trust, because they just want peace and quiet, just like us, to work, to be able to make a decent living, and live your life quietly.” “Overall, I think both the Palestinians and the PA respect their agreements with us.” “I think it’s hard to judge, that’s it’s basically, in general, it’s hard to judge the actions of a group who’s being oppressed.”

The next question we posed involved having the participants put themselves in the Palestinians’ shoes and say whether they think Palestinians trust Jews in Israel. The majority of participants (90%) said Palestinians do not trust Israeli Jews, and only 10% said that they do. When asked about the reasons for Palestinians’ distrust toward Israeli Jews, most participants (59.38%) replied that it stems from Israel’s harmful actions against Palestinians. For instance: “So, I think the simple person on the street doesn’t have much trust, I don’t know. They don’t have it good. The fact is in the end, we are still occupying for 40 years, and not letting it go, there’s no peace, there’s no state, nothing, despite all the promises. We say that the IDF is a wonderful and moral army, I’m sure they see it differently.” “I was in the army, I did reserve duty in the Jordan Valley, we were in some camp, when this huge convoy of people escorting a bride to her wedding passed by, and we tried to stop them to check them. So see, for example, twelve hours, we delayed them.” “Because they know the army, they know us in all those unpleasant situations when they’re being attacked, they’re familiar with our laws that aren’t pleasant for them.” “I’m sure that from their point of view, they’re right, they’re the oppressed and dispossessed, and the State of Israel is a bully looking to cut their wings at every chance they get. I can understand their perspective. No doubt Israel has an ideological camp that puts the Whole Land of Israel as its top priority. And to them, Palestinians should be expelled or remain as a kind of second class citizen in an Apartheid system.” Such responses reveal that many Israeli Jews are capable, if asked, of taking the Palestinian perspective, although they are a bitter enemy, and are able to understand that Palestinians distrust Israeli Jews because they are harmed by Jews.
There were participants (40.63 %) who claimed that Palestinians distrust Israeli Jews because something about them prevents them from trusting others. For example, one participant claimed: “I’m trying to be empathic, but at this point I find it hard to put myself in their shoes, whether they are trusting or not. I don’t know if they want to trust, if they want to develop trust in us.” Another participant said “They didn’t have a state, and now let’s look at Raad Salah, they’re saying they want even the Western Wall! … How can you build trust? Religiously, for them it’s very deep. Most of the people are religious.” One participant said that the conflict brings about distrust among Palestinians toward Israeli Jews.

A small proportion of participants (12.5 %) claimed that Palestinians do have trust in Jews, and that their personal experience with Israelis promotes that trust. For example, “Palestinians who have worked here, I think, have trust, depends who, if there was a Palestinian employer and an Israeli employer, I suppose the Palestinian would have more trust in the Israeli employer,” “I think they trust us. I think you can understand a lot from the steps Israel has taken.” And another participant said: “The Palestinians today, I think, for the most part, they know that the promises we make we usually do keep.”

Trust-Building Between Jews and Palestinians

Two important questions examined what might enable building trust among Israeli Jews toward Palestinians and vice versa. Regarding the first question, the majority of participants (59.38 %) said that avoiding or refraining from harm and violence, as well as neutralization of the Hamas administration may contribute to greater trust in the Palestinian people. 40.63 % of participants said that maintaining conditions that promote negotiations will contribute to trust in Palestinians. Two participants mentioned cooperative relationships as important for promoting trust. One participant suggested that contact between the groups can lead to greater trust, and one participant claimed that fostering a more humane view of Israeli Jews among Palestinians can increase their trust. Another participant raised the idea that recognition of wrongdoings committed by Palestinians against Israeli Jews can promote greater trust in them. Only one participant expressed the view that there is no possibility for trust in Palestinians by Israeli Jews. The important lesson learned from all these responses is that trust-building is possible. Here are a variety of examples describing a range of actions that Palestinians can take in order to increase trust in them by Israeli Jews. “Stop committing suicide here, for one. Stop sending Qassam and Grad rockets, for another.” “I believe that Hamas, in order for there to be more trust, will have to at least stop declaring that they want to destroy us. Because, from the get-go, you can’t trust a body, a person, etc., that makes such declarations. That’s a risk you don’t want to take. That’s one thing,” “Stop encouraging terrorism. As soon as that happens, everything will work out.” “I think less violence. Not to keep trying to hurt people.” “First, stop saying they want our entire country and they want to throw us into the sea. As soon as they declare, in

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writing, in a way that will be recognized all over the world, then we can give them a chance at least. I don’t know about full-fledged trust, but some trust can be built, give them back the Territories and let’s do something to keep things quiet here,” “Try to find some kind of balance between what they want and what we can give them,” “But we must have a final agreement, where they declare that they do not have any additional demands.... As soon as they declare they do not have other claims, other than what’s been agreed... I think things will calm down,” “As far as the PA.... more cooperation. In the end, it’s all about cooperation,” “To show they recognize us and that they take responsibility for the evil things they did,” “What might foster more trust is more meetings with the people on the other side of the fence. Talking. Knowing the other side. Really trying to understand, I don’t even know if I mean understand, but at least create some kind of channel for communication so some information can pass through,” “To see us as people too.” “It’s tough, it’s tough. What do they need to do, or what do we need to do? First of all, trust occurs when both sides want it, when both sides offer it. When it occurs and it’s mutual, then it can grow, it can increase. But for us to give trust while they burrow in their views and negative attitude? I don’t think so.”

In response to the second question, regarding what Israeli Jews can do in order for Palestinians to trust them more, 40.63 % of participants suggested that the conflict and it’s various aspects and components need to be resolved. About a quarter of the respondents said that refraining from harming Palestinians may contribute to their trust in Israeli Jews. One participant claimed that contact between the two groups can promote Palestinians’ trust in Israeli Jews. For example:

“I suppose we need from their perspective, to do all sorts of things like release prisoners, halt construction in the Settlements, dismantle Settlements, give them areas to control. All sorts of steps towards building their state”. “... and that we’ll demonstrate intent to live together, and not continue with the Settlements, but to show true intent that we understand that there is another nation that also deserves a state, and that we recognize their rights as we want our rights be recognized”, “Forming trust in us? We need to try to minimize harm to civilians. We need, as much as possible, to stick to actions that are defensive, and less aggressive”. “We, in order to foster trust, also need to stop hurting them. Both verbally and physically. I think that will help considerably”. “We need to treat them as people, and try, as much as possible, to find a way to work together so that they can achieve basic, minimal living conditions. We’re not doing enough to help”, “... to take small steps towards dialogue and meetings”.

18.75 % of participants said there is no way to build trust among Palestinians toward Israeli Jews—for example: “I don’t think it’s possible, trust can only exist if, say, we give them everything they want .... it’s a little problematic.” And another participant said “What do we need to do? Nothing. The problem is that we’ve taken enough action, and from their side, I think the distrust continues. Because we did one thing, and another, and another. It doesn’t help.”

In conclusion, the majority of participants are distrustful of Palestinians. This distrust is perceived as predominantly due to the Palestinians (violence toward human lives, not recognizing the State of Israel, not complying with accords, and an attitude of hate toward Israeli Jews). Other factors causing distrust that emerged
include the actions of the Palestinian leadership and negative attitudes espoused by Israeli Jews toward them. An attitude of trust toward Palestinians was associated with a humanistic view of Palestinians or as resulting from positive actions by the Palestinian people (compliance with accords). The majority of participants believe that Palestinians do not trust Israeli Jews. Palestinian distrust is perceived as stemming mostly from Israel’s harmful actions toward them (the Occupation and physical harm). This is a surprising finding, as the analysis of themes brings rise to a mirror image. That is to say, a complex pattern emerges, whereby participants blame Palestinians for Israeli Jews’ distrust in them, and blame Israeli Jews for Palestinians’ distrust in them. An additional factor identified by participants at the root of Palestinians’ distrust in Israeli Jews was that something about them precludes the possibility of trust (due to negative attitudes toward Israeli Jews or unrealistic demands of Israel). A variety of conditions that can enable or promote trust in Palestinians was identified, predominantly refraining from hurting Israeli Jews, neutralizing the Hamas administration and fulfilling conditions that can enable negotiations (flexibility in demands, and recognition of the State of Israel). Resolving the conflict in its entirety (focused especially on evacuation of Settlements, but also on keeping promises from the Israeli side) was suggested as the primary condition for promoting greater trust among Palestinians toward Israeli Jews. On the other hand, a number of suggestions were made in order to promote greater trust by Palestinians toward Israeli Jews. Many involved refraining from hurting Palestinians, releasing prisoners, ending the Occupation, and allowing the founding of a Palestinian State, halting development of settlements, and treating Palestinians more humanely. It was only a small minority that suggested that trust-building is impossible due to the Palestinian nature or to the intractability of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, because of its totality.

In light of these themes that emerged in the current study, we propose a conceptual framework for understanding trust and distrust in situations of intractable conflict. Distrusting the rival is an integral part of every serious and violent (intractable) intergroup conflict (Bar-Tal 2013; Kelman 2007). It implies negative expectations and lack of positive expectations. In essence, distrust is an essential part of the sociopsychological repertoire of the groups involved in this type of conflict. The distrust experienced in violent conflicts is continuously validated by what is experienced within the framework of the conflict. It is functional in times of conflict, because it positions the group in continuous preparedness and expectation for negative acts by the rival and then motivates the members of the ingroup to participate in action against the rival to defend the ingroup. Also, in times of conflict, on the one hand, it forces one to avoid particular behaviors, such as showing weakness or vulnerability, but also to avoid creative and original behaviors of good will toward the other. On the other hand, it forces one to carry out particular behaviors, such as deterrence and demonstration of strength.

In addition, in times of conflict, distrust is often attributed to the stable dispositions of the rival and therefore, no change of these dispositions is expected. It is based on real experiences and on information that is often selective, biased, and distorting. Distrust can be also seen as a motivational force that leads to a
self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, confirmation bias causes one to shut out most information that runs counter to the confirming beliefs, while amplifying the information that supports one’s held worldview. Confirmation bias, thus, leads to the overemphasis of the encountered information that stresses the untrustworthiness of the rival group. Distrust as a collective phenomenon, can be based on information and not on personal experiences. On the temporal dimension, trust/distrust can be passed on from generation to generation. Hence, the distrust experienced between two groups is not only contingent on the interactions between two individual group members, but also it might in some cases not even be contingent on the interactions with any of the now living group members on either side.

It should also be noted that in some cases, historical defeats, genocides, betrayals, occupations, and so on, may create a tendency for a generalized sense of distrust toward other societies not related to the conflict, and even to a siege mentality. The persecution of Jews throughout the centuries, culminating in the heinous attempt of their extermination in the Holocaust, serves as a foundation for Jewish chronic distrust of other groups.

Distrust, together with delegitimization, hatred, and animosity in the context of intractable conflicts, is part of what can be called the syndrome of hostility. Distrust refers to the expectations that the rival will engage in negative behavior. Delegitimization refers to the denial of the rival’s humanity and the psychological permit to hurt them (Bar-Tal and Hammack 2012). Hatred refers to a secondary, extreme, and continuous emotion that is directed at a particular group, and fundamentally and all inclusively denounces the group and its members, assuming that the group carried intentional harm, that its evilness is essential (Halperin 2008). Animosity refers to the nature of the relations that exist between two parties and it indicates that a group has a wish and intentions to harm the rival group. The syndrome of hostility includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements that together form one of the most destructive psychological foundations of intergroup conflict that feed the continuation of violence. Thus, one of the first challenges in every peacemaking process is to break this syndrome. It can begin with either delegitimization or distrust, because they are interrelated.

**Change of Distrust in Intractable Conflict**

Distrust in any type of relations—either interpersonal or intergroup—is not God given, but created by human beings and therefore can be changed. Thus, even distrust that plagues intractable conflicts can be changed in a long, gradual, and nonlinear process, as different cases demonstrate. The changing of distrust depends on the intensity of the ongoing conflict and especially the degree of violence. Any change begins with building instrumental trust. This simpler type of a reliance on the other party to “keep its part of the deal,” may in some cases promote trust that is related to viewing the other group as human and legitimate, close to what has previously been called fiduciary trust.

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As long as the sides have little to lose and much to gain, the impetus for trust-building measures is still lacking. When at least one of the parties gets to a point at which its has much to lose and little to gain from the continuation of the conflict, then trust can begin to be built (Deutsch 1960, 124). Hopefully, this will be the case in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict once the Israeli public will feel that it has little to gain from the continuation of the conflict, then it will be possible to move to a peacemaking process and build trusting relations.

Without going into details, we can outline a number of principles for building trust between two rival groups: Trust-building is related to changes in basic societal beliefs of delegitimization of the rival—it requires its legitimization, humanization, and personalization (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005); it requires elimination of behaviors that harm the other group and introduction of behaviors that benefit the other group; it is a process that requires planning, effort, good will, and policy; it requires reciprocal building; it requires coordination, contact, and communication; it can begin from the top but must go up to the grass roots, but it can also begin from the bottom and then it has to reach the leaders as well; it can begin with the intervention of a third party; it requires establishing criteria and mechanisms for judging the acts of the rivals and the situation; it can develop with the emergence of a new common threat and a new superordinate goal. Many of these principles were noted by the respondents in our study, but we widened their scope by suggesting additional ones.

Conclusion

Trust and distrust, as different sides of the same coin, are powerful psychological mechanisms that underlie human relations on every level. They are powerful vectors that determine their nature. Parties that experience trust have not only positive expectations about the outcome of mutual interactions, but also can initiate a spectrum of behaviors, taking the risk that that no harm will be done to them. On the other hand, distrust leads to expectations of possible inflicting of harm and therefore, each party must take precautionary steps in order to defend itself. Thus, we suggest that trust and distrust have many different cognitive, emotional, and behavioral implications that follow this view. Trust leads to a sense of security, at least some level of amiability, positive feelings, a positive view of the other party, care for reciprocity, investment in relations, care about their stability and continuation, and some degree of attention to the needs of the other party. Distrust, on the other hand, leads to a sense of insecurity and even fear, hostility, a negative view of the other party, negative feelings, precaution to prevent harm, need to supervise the behavior of the other party, and investment in deterrence and retribution. Distrust is thus a costly stance that requires psychological and tangible resources. In times of intergroup conflict, it is one of the detrimental factors that feed its continuation. As long as there is distrust, rivals will not embark on the road of peacemaking. In other words, building trust is one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for
genuine movement toward the peaceful resolution of a conflict. Trust can begin to be built only if there is also a change in the delegitimization of the rival. Parties can trust only a legitimized, personalized, and humanized rival. Thus, we believe that one of the challenges of rival parties that wish to terminate their conflict is to begin to build trust. The present study showed that in the case of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Israeli Jews were able to point out conditions that can foster trust. Moreover, they expressed the view that trust requires real steps that have to be taken by both parties: Israeli Jews and the Palestinians. But many of proposed steps can be taken by the leaders only. It is our hope that the leaders of the two nations who have suffered so many years because of the bloody conflict will have the courage to start building trust in order to bring the prolonged conflict to its end.

References