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Collective Memory as Social Representations

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The present paper illuminates collective memory as social representations in the context of intractable conflict. First it elaborates on the nature of collective memory as social representations, indicating that all the nations and ethnic groups need to have a narrative that tells the story about the group's past. These social representations tell a story that is functional and relevant to the society's present existence and future aspirations, as well as providing a meaning to social identity. Of special interest is the focus on the role of collective memory in societies involved in intractable conflict, because these social representations are determinative in maintaining and feeding the conflict and often function as a potent obstacle to conflict resolution and peace making process in general. The paper elaborates on the contents and functions of these social representations. Finally it describes the struggle between the social representations of collective memory between the two rivals in intractable conflict which often entertain contradictory and selective historical collective memories of the same past.

Keywords: Social representation, Collective memory, Intractable conflicts.

All the nations and ethnic groups need to have common past. Common past, told in a collective

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narrative[1] (or narratives), provides a line of commonality and continuation in experiences across time, which are crucial ingredients for group formation, survival and construction of its identity. This narrative called collective memory, tells the story or stories of the group's past as adopted by the group's members and institutions (Kansteiner, 2002; Olick & Robbins, 1998; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi & Levy, 2011). Kansteiner (2002) defined collective memory as representations of the past which are remembered by society members as the history of the group. Thus collective memory in this definition is viewed as social representation. The present paper takes this perspective and illuminates collective memory as social representations in the context of intractable conflict[2]. It will first elaborate on the nature of collective memory as social representations. Then it will describe the specific nature of collective memory in intractable conflicts.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY AS SOCIAL REPRESENTATION

In order to argue that collective memory can be considered as type of social representation, I shall first say few words on the nature of social representations. The work of Serge Moscovici on *social representations* (1973, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1988, 1993) provides the conceptual framework to this concept that was introduced by him on the basis of Durkheim's conception of *collective representation* (Durkheim, 1933). Moscovici proposed that on a general level, social representations are

"a set of concepts, statements and explanations originating in daily life in the course of

[1]Collective narratives are defined as "social constructions that coherently interrelate a sequence of historical and current events; they are accounts of a community's collective experiences, embodied in its belief system and represent the collective's symbolically constructed shared identity" (Bruner, 1990, p. 76).

[2]Intractable conflicts are violent, over goals viewed as existential, perceived as being of zero sum nature and unsolvable, preoccupy central position in the life of the involved societies, require immense investments of material and psychological resources and last for at least 25 years (Bar-Tal, 2007, 2013; Kriesberg, 1993).

> *interindividual communications. They are the equivalent in our society, of the myths and belief systems in traditional societies; they might even be said, the contemporary version of common sense"*. (1981, p. 181)

This definition implies that social representations are collectively shared concepts and images constructed in language and imbued with meaning (see Wagner & Hays, 2005). While concepts are abstract mental products, images are concrete pictorial mental elements—and together as shared and agreed codes that refer to people's common knowledge, i.e., their common sense theories about the social world. In other words, these representations constitute the constructed shared social reality of group members. The scope of contents ranges from science to "everyday thinking and the stock of ideas that give coherence to our religious beliefs, political ideas and the connections we create as spontaneously as we breathe" (1988, p. 214). Any contents can become representations when they get "anchored to a context, a network of meanings. To be anchored means that they have a reference and receive a determinative semantic value" (1993, p. 163). They range from very generalized hegemonic structures that are shared by society members and entire nations, and are reproduced historically, to highly specific knowledge structures that are shared merely by subgroups (Moscovici, 1988). They are not only held individually by most of the group members, but are expressed in public discourse on an individual and collective level (e.g., in mass media) and also reflected in the products of a society, such as books, sculptures, paintings or films. This conception clearly indicates that collective memory as a societal belief system, shared by ethnic groups that constructs social reality, falls within the range of social representations.

Social representations about the collective history composite a complete, meaningful and comprehensive story about the past. These representations are not necessarily based on researched historiography, as presented by historians in research institutions, but consist of a construction of the past by a collective with the symbols, myths, models, major events, and plots that are part of the group culture. They serve as narratives that are remembered by the group members, carried by group's institutions, channels and cultural products and transmitted to group members (Carmines & Stimson, 1989; Liu & Laszlo, 2007; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Levy, 2011). Thus the study of collective memory is necessary not only for revealing how society

views its past, but mostly for understanding societal functioning and activity in present, as well as societal aspirations and goals for the future. In fact, collective memory can be conceptualized as shared social representations on particular themes regarding the remembered past of the society that provide epistemic foundation for the group belonging, unity, solidarity, and identification. It is shared, used in public discourse by leaders, elites and common society members and expressed widely in channels of communication and in societal institutions. Moreover collective, memory as shared social representations, serves as major engine for energizing collective action. It is one of the major epistemic bases for delineating courses of action and motivating mobilization.

In the presentation of collective memory as social representations the focus is on popular collective memory that refers to the representations held by the society members in their repertoire (Alonso, 1988; Nets-Zehngut,2011a and b; Rosoux, 2001; Zheng, 2008). This focus distinguishes it from official collective memory that is held and imparted by the formal institutions of the society. Popular collective memory in contrast is first of all presented personally orally by family members, friends, and other informal agents, as well as transmitted through contents of ceremonies and rituals that the community carries. But in some societies official and popular memories can be similar and even identical and then in these cases popular memory is imparted also by the formal channels and institutions of the society such as schools, or mass media.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Collective memory has a number of characteristics: First, as already noted, it does not intend to provide an objective history of the past, but tells about the past that is functional and relevant to the society's present existence and future aspirations. Thus, it provides socially constructed representations that have some basis in actual events, but are biased, selective and distorted in ways that meets present societal needs (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Southgate, 2005). It is entrenched in the particular socio-political-cultural context that imprints its meaning. In this vein Connerton (1989) pointed out that "our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past. We experience our present world in the context

which is causally connected with the past event and objects" (p. 2).

Second, representations of collective memory are shared by group members and are treated by many of them as truthful accounts of the past and a valid history of the group. They hold them in their repertoires, rely on them in constructing political worldviews, express them in intra-societal public discourse as major arguments in intergroup debates, and use them as a rationale in justifying their line of action. The representations, carried in minds or expressed in tangible products, are not of unitary nature because of individual differences that characterize human beings even when they hold the same representations.

Third, collective memory serves as foundations for experiencing shared emotions (e.g., Sen, & Wagner, 2005). This means that the social representations elicit various emotions that society members carry as individuals and as a collective. These emotions are part of the collective emotional orientation and serve various societal functions. Thus, collective memory may raise fear because of past traumatic events, or anger because of remembered unjust acts carried by another groups, or pride because of the memorized victory and heroic acts performed by group members. The emotions provide a particular meaning to the remembered events and facilitate their memorizing (see for example, Bar-Tal, 2001; Kouttab, 2007).

Fourth, collective memory provides the foundations of contents for various cultural symbols such as literature, films, monuments, ceremonies, and so on. The remembered past with its events, heroes and myths serves as a basic source for creation of cultural symbols and narratives. For example the national museums are filled out with pictures that depict various scenes from collective memory and the national literature describes stories based on this narrative (for example, Crane, 1997).

Fifth collective memory should be viewed as a multilayer narrative since new major event or prolonged experience is interpreted and understood on the basis of the held collective memory of the previous events, even if they are unrelated, as long as it serves the needs and goals of the society. Then it is integrated into the narrative and serves as evidence for the general representation of the group.

Sixth, collective memory is dynamic and changeable. Through the years not only it may change its focuses, heroes, commemorated events or particular narratives, but also it may change

its general outlook, by changing its orientation. It depends very much on the political and cultural context in which appear new needs, goals, values or practices. The case of such change is well illustrated in Poland with regard to remembering its Communist past.

Seventh, collective memory serves the political-societal and economic decisions on the societal level and is used to justify societal actions in the past, present, and those that are planned for the future. It serves as a kind of rationale for making policies and taking decisions by the authorities (Langenbacher, 2010). Moreover they are used in the interest of power politics to justify particular policies, goals and lines of actions. They can be viewed as populist ideological contentions that persuade the masses to take a particular course of action (see for example Sen, and Wagner, 2005 in the case of Hindu-Muslim in India and Bar-Tal & Čehajić-Clancy, 2013 in the case of Balkan wars in the 1990s).

Finally, collective memory is perceived by group members as characterizing the collective in a unique, distinctive and exclusive way. It tells the particular narrative of the group's past and thus outlines the boundaries for group's description and characterization. In this way it makes a major contribution to the formation, maintenance and strengthening of the social identity (Liu, & Laszlo, 2007). This contribution will now be further elaborated.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND IDENTITY

Construction of social identity is a crucial requirement in the formation of any society or group, because individuals have to identify themselves as group members in order for the group to exist (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1999; Worchel, Morales, Paez, & Deschamps, 1998). The formation of social identity is based on a self-categorization process in which a collective of individuals group themselves cognitively as belonging to the same group, in contrast to some other classes of collectives (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). On this basis, sense of similarity, the uniformity, unity, interdependence and coordination of group behavior emerge. But while self-categorization is fundamental for self-definition as society member, there is need for additional societal beliefs which provide meaning to social

identity (Bar-Tal, 1998; David & Bar-Tal, 2009; Turner, 1991, 1999). Social representations of collective memory fulfill this role. They outline common origin, describe common past events and thus illuminate present experiences. In telling the story, they form a shared past as society members acquire the common narrative and hold it. As shared narrative, social representations of collective memory provide the sense of continuity which is crucial for the construction of the meaningful social identity. The shared narrative indicates to society members that the common present is a continuation of the common past and thus the society is a consequence of common past experiences and events that unite the destiny of the society members.

Thus social representations of collective memory supply basis for feeling of commonality, cohesiveness, belonging, uniqueness and solidarity - all necessary elements for the evolvement of social identity. Sharing same social representations of collective memory, therefore, shapes society members' identity. These social representations allow differentiation among societies, drawing boundaries between those who hold them with great confidence and those who even do not know them. Thus, social representations of collective memory in addition, to other elements such as territory, language, customs, or physical features, characterize the particular collective and contribute to its uniqueness and to the formation of well defined collective with clear social identity (see David & Bar-Tal, 2009). They are an essential ingredient in constructing and maintaining the "imagined community" of the nationhood (e.g., Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990; Kohl & Fawcett, 1996; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Southgate, 2005; Wertsch, 2002). Moreover, Corkalo, Ajdukovic, Weinstein, Stover, Djipa, and Biro, (2004) talk about the "ethnization of memory", where "memory itself and interpretation of the past become ethnically exclusive, creating subjective, psychological realities and different symbolic meanings of common events in people who belong to different ethnic groups" (p. 157-158). Because of their critical role in identity politics, social representations of history are strongly linked to their state production and control, through such institutions as the public education system and official ceremonies and commemorations (LeGoff, 1992; Liu, & Laszlo, 2007; Liu, & Hilton, 2005; Olick 2003).

COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF INTRACTABLE CONFLICTS

Of special interest is the focus on the role of collective memory in societies involved in intractable conflict, because these social representations are determinative in maintaining and feeding the conflict and often function as a potent obstacle to conflict resolution and peace making process in general.

Nature of the Collective Memory of Conflicts

In the case of intractable conflict, social representations of collective memory evolve to present the history of the conflict to society members (Cairns, & Roe, 2003; Connerton, 1989; Halbwachs, 1992; Middleton, & Edwards, 1990; Olick & Robbins 1998; Papadakis, Perstianis, & Welz, 2006a; Pennebaker, Paez, & Rimé, 1997; Wertsch, 2002). This narrative develops over time, and it describes the outbreak of the conflict and its course, providing a coherent and meaningful picture of what has happened from the societal perspective (Devine-Wright, 2003; Papadakis, Perstianis, & Welz, 2006b; Tint, 2010). Of special uniqueness in the case of intractable conflict is the fact that the rival societies form collective memory about the same events because any intergroup conflict involves always at least two sides (Bar-Tal, 2013). Nevertheless, as will be explained later, the two narratives about the collective memory differ dramatically from each other (see for example Adwan, Bar-On, & Naveh, 2012 presenting Israeli Jewish and Palestinian historical narratives and Orr, Sagi, & Bar-On, 2000 in their study of Israeli and Palestinian high school students). They look as completely two different stories because they come to fulfill goals and needs of two rival societies, many which are opposing (Bar-Tal & Geva, 1986; Winter, 2010).

In every intractable conflict the involved parties construct conflict supporting *collective master narrative* that focuses on its entirety. It explains the causes of the conflict, describes its nature, refers to major events, presents that image of the rival, portrays own presentation, and makes major attribution of responsibility for the eruption of the conflict, its continuation and the used violence (see for example French collective memory about the Algerian war in Prost 1999). It provides a complete and meaningful picture of the conflict. In addition to this general master narrative about the conflict in its wholeness, there are also more specific narratives that concern major events in the conflict, such as wars, and mini narratives that refer to a specific incident

such as a battle and even very specific events in a battle, or personalities involved in the conflict (Auerbach, 2010). Most of these narratives tell about extraordinary and exceptional events that have influence on the well being of the society and many of them refer to violence. Violent events are core behaviors in intractable conflicts that greatly preoccupy the society members involved (Bar-Tal, 2003). Thus, the social representations of collective memories usually refer to wars, occupation, major battles, atrocities performed by the rival group, as well as to the revered in-group heroes that took an active part in the conflict, usually in the military role and performed courageous acts or were commanders in the violent confrontations. Out of many events, Paez and Liu (2011) proposed that society maintains those narratives that fit dominant cultural values, that are relevant for current social issues, that enhance collective self-esteem, that are based on direct and vivid experience of the society and that are supported by institutional and informal acts of remembering.

Of special importance are *Major Events* that contribute determinative repertoire (beliefs, attitudes and emotions) for the social identity and provide the prism through which present is judged. Each society has major events that become symbolic events which are remembered by the group and commemorated. Groups encode important experiences, especially extensive suffering, in their collective memory, which can maintain a sense of woundedness and past injustice through generations. These events can be part of the ongoing intractable conflict or events unrelated to the conflict that took place in a distant past. In both cases, they provide the key evaluative measure which enables to assess other events in the group history. But they always serve the needs and goals of the present and therefore their content and attributed meaning are in the service of the ongoing conflict. Still they may change with time as the needs and goals change too. The society eternalizes these events and keeps to refer to them in public discourse, cultural products, ceremonies and commemorations. Moreover these events constitute a major symbol in educational system as the young generation of group members are required to learn about them over and over again and grasp their significance for the group.

Thus any attempts to understand present dynamics between Hutu and Tutsi in the Rwandan conflict has to take in to account that Hutu well remember that during the colonial time Tutsi were granted privileges and a wide spread discrimination was practiced against them with the help of Tutsi dominated administration. Also, they remember that with the granted

independence Tutsi began ongoing violent guerilla activities to destabilize the new state. In contrast, Tutsi collective memory focuses on the discrimination that they suffered with the ascendance of Hutu to power and the ongoing violence against them that culminated with the attempts to genocide them in 1994 (Prunier, 1998; Slocum-Bradlley 2008).

Contents of the Collective Memory of Conflicts

In terms of particular contents, the social representations of collective memory of an intractable conflict touch on at least four important themes that will be described at length in the next chapter. First, they justify the outbreak of the conflict and the course of its development. They outline the reasons for the supreme and existential importance of the conflicting goals, stressing that failure to achieve them may threaten the very existence of the group. In addition, they disregard the goals of the other side, describing them as unjustified and unreasonable.

Second, the social representations of collective memory delegitimize the opponent[3]. They describe the adversary's inhuman and immoral behavior through the course of the conflict and present him as intransigent, irrational, extreme and irreconcilable. Since societies involved in intractable conflicts view their own goals as justified and perceive themselves in a positive light, they attribute all responsibility for the outbreak of the conflict and its continuation to the opponent (Bar-Tal, 1990; Bar-Tal & Hammack, 2012; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2007). That is, it is the adversary who prevented a possible peaceful settlement of the conflict. This is an important theme that enlightens the conflict in a particular way. In addition, the narrative focuses on the other side's violence, atrocities, cruelty, lack of concern for human life and his viciousness. All these social representations present the opponent as an existential threat to the in-group's survival Third, the social representations of collective memory of intractable conflict present a positive glorifying image of the in-group (e.g., Baumeister, & Hastings, 1997). They describe events that impinge well on the society and exhibit its positive characteristics. Of special emphasis are

[3] Delegitimization is defined as *"categorization of a group, or groups, into extremely negative social categories that exclude it, or them, from the sphere of human groups that act within the limits of acceptable norms and/or values, since these groups are viewed as violating basic human norms or values and therefore deserve maltreatment*" (Bar-Tal & Hammack, 2012, p. 30).

usually events that present the humane and moral side of the society that can be contrasted with the evilness of the rival. Another line of description usually focuses on the bravery and heroism of the society that enables withstanding the enemy.

Fourth, the social representations of collective memory present own group as the sole victim of the conflict and of the opponent. This view is formed over a long period of violence as a result of the society's sufferings and losses (Bar-Tal, 2003; Mack, 1990). Its formation is based on social representations about the justness of the goals of one's group and on one's positive self-image, while emphasizing the wickedness of the opponent's goals and characteristics (Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori, & Gundar, 2009; Frank, 1967; Vollhardt, 2012). In other words, focusing on the injustice, harm, evil, and atrocities associated with the adversary, while emphasizing one's own society as being just, moral and human, leads society members to present themselves as victims. Social representations about victimhood imply that the conflict was imposed by an adversary, who not only fights unjust goals, but also uses immoral means to achieve them.

Collective memory contains additional two very specific themes: A theme referring to violent confrontations with the rival and a theme that is focusing on the fallen members of the ingroup and especially the fighters, with an emphasis on heroes. These two themes are central components of the culture of conflict; they evolve as result of the violence that is very significant part of intractable conflicts.

With regard to the events of violent confrontations societies carry their memories independently of their outcomes. Violence of intractable conflicts by its nature leads necessarily at least partially to traumatizing of societies involved with enduring effects and therefore is well remembered by society members (Winter, & Sivan, 1999). On popular level society members remember the general personal misery and the suffering. But the formal collective memory focuses more on the victories and defeats. Victories are remembered for providing exemplary event and for honoring the heroes and leaders who lead to them. They arouse feelings of pride and glory that provide the inspiration for their repetition. They play an important role in showing the society members that they can cope successfully with the rival; that the conflict can be won; and that investments in the conflict are paid off. Defeats are remembered for the lessons that societies can learn. They arouse grief, sorrow and frustration which lead often to wishes of vengeance. They show to society members that they are victims in the conflict and provide

conformation to the evil nature of the rival (see for example, Bar-Tal, 2007 describing the collective memory of the Israeli Jewish society, Papadakis, 1998 describing the collective memory of the Greek Cypriots and Ramanathapillai, 2006 describing the collective memory of Tamils).

The second theme focuses on the fallen society members in the conflict. Most often it refers to the fallen active participants in the violent confrontations with the rival, for example, in battles, but it may also refer to the civilian population that is victimized in the conflict as, for example, fatalities of terror attacks (Sivan, 1999). All fallen are remembered and commemorated - they constitute the highest price that the society pays for the conflict (Winter, 1995). Their death is viewed as being untimely and unjustful because the fallen could have lived if not the evilness of the rival who mal-intentionally caused the harm. The performed harm is irreversible as no compensation can bring back to life the fallen. It is thus not surprising that society members view themselves as victims in the conflict. But of special concern are the fighters who either volunteered or were sent in the name of the society. Usually the fighters are young males who at the beginning of their adulthood fall for the sake of their fellow society members. Their fall is especially painful because they are considered as being sent by the society to fulfill the most danger role in the conflict. Thus their fall is seen as societal loss. Among the fallen are especially remembered so called heroes – those fighters that performed extraordinary acts that also lead often to their death. Some of them literarily sacrificed their life by performing heroic acts.

Mosse (1990) pointed out to the importance of commemorating of the fallen:*"War monuments commemorating the fallen, symbolize the strength and manliness of the nation's youth and provided an example for other generations to follo" (p. 35).*Indeed, memorials fulfill important functions of perpetuating the memory of the fallen and inspiring the remaining society members with the will to continue the conflict and fight the enemy. But, society's members not only remember the fallen, they also remember why they fell, and their unfinished mission of the fallen. With time, these memories are institutionalized in rituals and ceremonies, and thus are maintained and reinforced (Connerton, 1989; Halbwachs, 1992). The monuments and cemeteries, then, are constant and enduring reminders about the losses suffered in conflict, the sacrifices made by patriots and heroes, and the malevolence of the opponent. In one sense, and

during certain periods, they represent concrete investments in the continuation of the conflict (Kasabova, 2008).

These contents provide the major themes of collective memory that appear in the context of intractable conflict. These themes are general and during the escalation of the conflict they are dominant. Nevertheless there are individual and group differences with regard to the particular contents that individuals and groups hold and emphasize.

The narratives of Tamils (supporters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam- LTTE) and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka provide an illustration to the above described six themes. Both societies have carried collective memories of intractable conflict that lasts decades and turned into continuous war between 1983-2009. As a distinguished ethnic minority, the Tamils struggle to end their discrimination and to establish independent state. Their collective memory of the conflict focuses on the violence that was inflicted on them such as massacres in 1956 or 1976 or 1987 and later during the war in which dozens of thousands of Tamils were killed and significant portion were displaced. The collective memory views the Sinhalese as brutal murderers and their own group as brave victims who were able to withstand stronger army through many years. In contrast the Sinhalese, as a majority, believe that they have just goals to solidify the dominance of the Sinhalese culture, especially in view of the fact that they were discriminated through many years during the colonial period. They viewed themselves as victims and Tamils supporters of LTTE as terrorists who carried out over 170 suicide attacks in which many civilians lost their lives. Violence and especially the civil war constitute a major part of the collective memory of both groups with regard to the conflict with the focus on the violence and the fallen, as at least 80,000 people were killed in during the civil war (De Mel, 2007; Little, 1994).

FUNCTIONS OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Collective memory in general plays essential functions in the life of every ethnic group, being a fundamental ingredient for collective identity and a pillar of culture, but in times of intractable conflict its role is greatly augmented. This is the key premise that can explain much about the remembered and maintained representations of the collective memory of intractable conflict. As discussed, although the representations of collective memory tell the story of the past, they are

directed towards the present. They have to be functional for the present struggle in intractable conflict on the individual and collective level. Thus various functional parts are well remembered and rehearsed, whereas the dysfunctional parts of the collective memory disappear or are modified.

First of all the social representations of collective memory of conflict, as were presented, supply the needed contents from which collective identity is constructed. Second, social representations of collective memory satisfy basic needs that are deprived during intractable conflicts, like, for example, psychological needs of knowing, mastery, positive identity, and so on (Burton, 1990; Lederer, 1980; Staub, 1999, 2003). They do not even try to reach the truth, but the major criterion for their construction is to fulfill the needs and goals of the society that is engaged in very harsh, serious and violent conflict that lasts many years. This is thus of existential requirements to produce collective memory that will help to meet the challenges of the conflict.

The social representations of the collective memory provide a coherent and meaningful narrative about the past history that allows comprehensive, coherent and meaningful understanding of the conflict for society members (Liu, & Laszlo, 2007). Within this narrative it explains why the conflict erupted, why it still continues, why it is violent, why it was necessary to carry even immoral acts against the rival and so on. As an epistemic basis, the narrative of the collective memory provides major rationalization and justification for the present decisions and lines of actions. The story of the past explains why it is necessary to carry violent acts against the enemy including immoral behavior, why it is necessary to adhere to the original goals without compromises. Also the narrative of the past plays a role in satisfying the basic need of collective positive self-esteem. It focuses on the positive features and acts of the in-group as well as differentiates between own group and the rival group, portraying it as evil and immoral. Collective memory also provides the basis for a sense of unity and solidarity, by emphasizing these themes.

Third, the social representations of collective memory supply the motivational tool for mobilization of the society members to be involved in the conflict because they outline a comprehensive rational for the conflict. Of special importance is the need to mobilize the society members for the conflict who will not only care and be recruited, but will be ready to sacrifice

their lives on behalf of the group. This function is essential for the continuation of the struggle which must be perceived as existential and just. Social representations of collective memory outline the reasons for the mobilization and portray heroes that serve as models to sacrifice.

CONTRADICTION AND STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE COLLECTIVE MEMORIES OF THE RIVALS

Each narrative, by definition, is unique, distinctive and exclusive (Baumeister, & Gastings, 1997; Irwin-Zarecka, 1994). The special case of narratives of collective memory of conflicts is that at least two societies have a collective memory regarding the same history. It follows that opposing groups in a conflict will often entertain contradictory and selective historical collective memories of the same past. Thus it is possible to speak about contradiction and clash between the narratives that have far reaching implications (Bar-Tal & Geva, 1986).

The negation and contradiction is expressed in a number of ways: Each side blames the other for the outbreak of the conflict and its continuation. Each side stresses the importance of own goals and their existential and moral foundations and at the same time disregards and delegitimizes the goals of the rival. Those are important points to justify eruption of the conflict and its continuation as well as present the evilness and the narrow-mindedness of the rival. Each side describes the violence of the other side, blames the other for the moral misdeeds, and stresses various negative characteristics in order to delegitimize it (see, for example, Sen, & Wagner, 2005). They are almost always attributed to genetics and dispositions, indicating their stability and intentionality Also, each side focuses on the irrationality and intransigence of the other side to continue the conflict, presenting itself as wanting peace, being rational and compromising. These discrepancies enhance the magnitude of the conflict, and complicate the possibilities of resolving it. Each narrative entrenches the society in the own rightness regarding the causes of the conflict and the adherence to the original goals. Moreover the delegitimization of the other side and the sense of being the victim serve as major obstacles to the evolvement of trust, which is the necessary condition for development of the readiness to compromise and beginning of the peace process (see for example Rotberg, 2006 with an analysis of the Israeli and Palestinian narratives of their conflict).

This contradiction characterizes every intractable conflict that have taken place. Algerians and French, Whites and Blacks in South Africa were carrying contradicting narratives through their conflicts and the same contradictions can be found in the ongoing conflicts between Tutsi and Hutu, between Russians and Chechens or between Tamils and Singhalese.

Social representations of rival collective memories in conflict collide and serve as one of the battle ground between the sides. The two sides in conflict struggle to impose their collective memory regarding the account of the whole conflict, as well as regarding specific events (see Bar-Tal, Oren, & Nets-Zenghut, 2012). This battle is carried on three fronts. First, each society involved in intractable conflict attempts to maintain unitary view of the collective memory among its members. Thus it makes all the effort to impart the narrative to society members and persuade them in its exclusive validity. A change in the collective memory that questions the national narrative is viewed as weakening the ability to withstand the enemy and therefore the societies, not only widely propagate and even indoctrinate the national existing narrative, but also use their formal and informal mechanisms to suppress attempts to introduce alternative narratives regarding specific events and the holistic account, that may undermine presented collective memory (Paez & Liu, 2011; Tint, 2010).

In addition, each society makes an effort to convince the international community that its narrative is exclusively truthful and validated. This struggle which is carried within the psychological domain is as intensive as the violent confrontations that take place. The outcome of this struggle may determine even the course of the conflict, because the international community usually tries to help morally and materially the side that is viewed as the victim in the conflict. It means that each party in the conflict makes an effort to persuade the international community about being not only just, but also as being injustly and immorally harmed in the conflict, while the other party, not only carries unjust conflict, but also uses immoral ways of confrontations and violates principles of conducting warfare as well as of human rights (Barkan, 2000; Mor, 2007; Langenbacher, 2010). Finally, a society involved in intractable conflict even tries to persuade the rival group in the falsehood and untruthfulness of its account of what happened in the conflict. This is part of the psychological confrontation between the groups (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006; Schleifer, 2009).

It is important to note that in the dissemination of the collective memory of any conflict,

as well as in the struggle on all the three levels, societies that have a state have an advantage over societies that need to establish their institutions. This advantage expresses the asymmetry in conflicts. Societies such as Turkish, Russian, Singhalese or Jewish have at their disposition organs, institutions, and organizations as well trained staff to plan, to form, to transmit, to control, and to disseminate their official narrative with the themes through the course of the conflict. This line of action pertains to the master conflict supporting narrative and various specific narratives that appear continuously during the conflict.

CONCLUSIONS

Groups need to have a past as it is an important element in their collective identity showing that there is continuity in their existence and that they have a firm foundation for their uniqueness and solidarity. But in times of intractable conflict, social representations of collective memory receive special place and focus because the challenges that stand before the involved societies are enormous. First of all, they need the continual mobilization of society members for support and participation in conflict in various capacities. Society members have to be ready to die for their group - if they stop this readiness, conflicts will have to be terminated. Also, they need resilience in coping with the various hardships, stresses and other negative experiences that are an integral part of intractable conflic, in which violence plays a major role. In this context the involved society members have to believe that the conflict is just and the sacrifices are worthy. Social representations of collective memory provide crucial testimony to these needed conviction; they depict the reasons for the conflict eruption, describes the events that took place, and explains why it did not end. This is done always in a selective, biased, distorted and simplistic way, with goal to put all the blame on the rival and portray him with most negative characteristics, which stand in a clear contrast to the glorification and moralization of the in-group.

Saying this I do not want to imply that societies involved in intractable conflicts have equal responsibilities for its eruption, or carry a similar level of violence. There is no doubt that intractable conflicts erupt also because of continuous immoral practice of one group in the conflict. These groups need more selection, biases and distortions in order to cover the carried

injustice. They need to find justifications and explanations that will rationalize their behaviors that led to the eruption of the conflict. Also while all the groups during the conflict use immoral acts, some of them distinctively perform more atrocities on a wide scale. These groups also need justifications and explanations for the inhuman treatment of human beings. In all these cases collective memory serves these needs.

Thus in many cases social representations of collective memory function as an obstacle and a barrier to the peace process because they crystallize a self-righteous and ethnocentric narrative that hides, not only own misdeeds and deficiencies, but also blocks information about humanness of the rival and especially about his just needs and goals. In this functioning, blind adherence to social representations of collective memory of conflict, its continuation is assured. But social representations of collective memory do not stand alone in their functioning. They are well integrated with and supported by an ethos of conflict and emotional collective orientations that are present in ongoing interactions. Together they are part of the socio-psychological infrastructure that serves as a pillar of culture of conflict. Any attempt to embark on the road of peace, in the peace building process, requires change of the social representations of collective memory that fed the continuation of the conflict.

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