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A Double Bind on Double Binds: Israel and the Palestinian National Authority

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Title: A Double Bind on Double Binds: Israel and the Palestinian National Authority

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Abstract. This article describes a number of double binds within double binds confronting Israeli governmental decision makers concerning political violence perpetrated by representatives, supporters, and exploiters of the Palestinian National Authority in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Israel itself.

The construct double bind usually denotes being in a situation suggesting two choices--both of which seem to present significant negative consequences. Currently, Israeli governmental decision makers are confronted with a number of these situations even after the last Middle East summit meeting with leaders from the United States, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the United Nations, and the European Union.

Double Bind #1. Significant political violence has occurred after Islamic Friday Prayer services at what Muslims call the Noble Sanctuary: Haram al Sharif. If the Israelis attempt to prevent the violence by preventing or significantly modulating ingress to the Sanctuary, they stand accused of being unjust, of preventing people of practicing their faith, and of being unworthy protectors and controllers of a holy site. If the Israelis allow business as usual at the Sanctuary, they are faced with the political violence, with being accused as aggressors for using force in dealing with it, and, again, with being unworthy protectors and controllers of the site.

Double Bind #2. Similar Issues affect the Israelis by their very labeling of the Noble Sanctuary as the Temple Mount. Using the former name reinforces PNA and Islamic claims to the site. Using the latter name enrages many members of the Islamic faith and can brand the Israelis as insensitive to the religious needs of others.

Double Bind #3. The construct Palestinian usually has meant anyone living in some territory that was or is called Palestine. If the Israelis use this term according to this most common denotation, they are accused by the PNA and its supporters of not recognizing the legitimate rights and aspirations of a group called "the Palestinian people" who only are a segment of the people covered by the most common denotation. If the Israelis use the PNA version of "Palestinian," they ineluctably weaken their own (Israelis) claims to legitimate rights, aspirations, and, perhaps, their very existence.

What to make of these double binds? A significant Issue in political psychology relates to double bind consequences. One alternative is quite noxious in that immersion in personally salient double binds fosters a fragmenting of functioning analogous to familiogenic models of schizophrenia. Yet another alternative fosters cohesion and homogeneity of purpose that could render a political entity quite formidable analogous to models of ingroups and outgroups--even if possibly paranoid.

Which applies to the Israelis? Counsel to extricate from double bind situations altogether might render the question moot. What is not moot is the nature of adversarial and Israeli self-defeating behaviors contributing to double binds and causing the question to be raised. (See Alper, G. (1990). The double bind in psychoanalysis. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 20, 273-283; Barnes, G. (1997). A story about telling stories: Introducing Bateson's "Epistemology of organization". *Transactional Analysis*

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