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Threat Perceptions and Feelings as Predictors of Jewish-Israeli Support for Compromise with Palestinians*

IFAT MAOZ

Department of Communication, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

CLARK McCAULEY

Department of Psychology, Bryn Mawr College

A representative sample of Israeli Jews (N = 504) completed a survey assessing attitudes towards compromise in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Support for compromise was well predicted (R = .63) by a combination of four scales: perception of collective threat from Palestinians, perception of zero-sum relations between Palestinians and Israelis, personal fear of Palestinians, and sympathy towards Palestinians. Feelings of hostility towards Palestinians did not make an independent contribution to this prediction. As hypothesized, respondents who perceived high collective threat and zero-sum relations were much *less* supportive of making concessions to Palestinians. However, respondents who indicated feeling personal fear were in regression analysis slightly *more* supportive of compromise. Sympathy toward Palestinians was associated with more support for compromise. Additionally, religiosity was strongly associated with decreased support for compromise. However, entering threat perceptions and sympathy into the equation substantially reduced the predictive value of religiosity, indicating that psychological mechanisms underlie, at least in part, the tendency of more religious respondents to show less support for making concessions to Palestinians.

Introduction

The post-Cold War world has seen an escalation and expansion of protracted violent ethno-political conflicts in different areas of the world. Here we focus on one such conflict, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict that has continued for over a century with alternations between periods of extreme violence and periods of relative peace (Kelman, 1999). Though many believe that compromise, and specifically a two-state compromise, may be a reasonable way to resolve this longstanding conflict and attain stable peace, significant factions of the public on each side object to compromise and no agreement has been reached.

Students of government policymaking recognize public opinion as a significant factor constraining policy choices. Particularly in democratic states, attitudes and beliefs of citizens are described as an

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important part of the environment that influences government decisions (Nadeau et al., 1994; Noelle-Neumann, 1993). A notable example of this kind of influence exists in Israel, where large numbers of Jewish Israelis are opposed to making concessions to the Palestinians. Their opposition is a crucial factor affecting policymakers' ability to negotiate and implement concessions to Palestinians (Yuchtman-Yaar & Hermann, 1997).

Given the significance of public opinion in resolving conflict and attaining peace, it is important to understand the origins of attitudes toward compromise policies. In recent years, a number of studies have begun to explore mechanisms that influence and factors that are associated with extent of support for compromise proposals in conflict (see, for example, Maoz, Yaniv & Ivri, 2007). One such mechanism is 'reactive devaluation' in which each side in a conflict tends to devalue proposals made by the other side (Ross, 1995). In the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Maoz et al. (2002) found that Israeli Jews evaluated concession proposals as less fair and less beneficial to Israel when presented as Palestinian proposals than when the *same* proposals were presented as coming from Israeli negotiators. Also, in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, polling studies have identified political values as well as demographic characteristics that are associated with Jewish-Israeli extent of support for compromise solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Shamir & Shamir, 2000). Hermann & Yuchtman-Yaar (2002) identified several demographic variables such as (lower) religiosity, (higher) level of education, and (higher) income that predict Jewish-Israeli support for the Oslo peace process. In the same context, Berrebi & Klor (2006) demonstrate that Jewish-Israeli public opinion support for more hawkish and less compromising politics increases after periods with high level of terrorism and decreases after periods of relative calm.

Our goal is to explore the beliefs and emotions that contribute to supporting or rejecting political compromise policies in conflict. In the context of the protracted conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, our study tests threat perceptions and intergroup emotions as correlates of Israeli-Jewish attitudes towards compromise policies with Palestinians.

Threat Perception and Support for Compromise

A major factor that has been consistently found as explaining support for less compromising and more extreme, aggressive, and belligerent policies towards outgroups is perception of outgroup collective threat – the perception of realistic threat to one's own group or state posed by another group or state (Gordon & Arian, 2001). The tendency to become more politically intolerant under conditions of outgroup threat is well documented (Gibson, 1992; Marcus et al., 1995; Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter, 2006). Threat has also been found to increase support for punitive and aggressive actions against the threatening outgroup (Arian, 1989; Huddy et al., 2005) and to decrease support for more moderate and compromising policies (Gordon & Arian, 2001; Bar-Tal, 2001).

Negotiation research has identified another form of threat perception that appears to be particularly powerful in blocking mutually agreed solutions between individuals with conflicting interests. This is the zero-sum perception – the perception that each side can profit only to the extent that the other side loses, that there is no possibility of an agreement that would leave both sides better off (Bazerman & Neale, 1992:16–22; Thompson, 1995). A previous study (Maoz & McCauley, 2005) has indicated that zero-sum perceptions of the Israeli–Palestinian

conflict are associated with less support for compromise solutions to this conflict. The above review leads us to expect that:

H1: Perceptions of collective threat and of zero-sum relations will significantly predict support for compromise policies – with higher ratings on both these predictors associated with lower support for compromise.

Intergroup Emotions in Conflict

Considerable research literature testifies to the importance of emotions in understanding especially intractable or longstanding political conflict. Studies by Dan Bar-On demonstrate the need to recognize, acknowledge, and work through both negative and positive emotions towards members of other groups. This work is important not only in situations of protracted conflict but in the aftermath of any kind of extreme intergroup violence (Bar-On, 1999, 2003; Bar-On & Kassem, 2004). Similarly Ervin Staub emphasizes the role of anger and hatred in escalating conflict to the extremes of ethnic cleansing and genocide (Staub, 2000).

An innovative line of work introduced by Bar-Tal and his colleagues (Bar-Tal, 2001, 2007; Bar-Tal, Halperin & de Rivera, 2007; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006) draws attention to the crucial role of emotional climate and collective emotions, and especially of fear, in perpetuating intractable conflict and preventing its resolution. This literature specifies the mechanisms through which society members are induced to experience fear, even when in fact they are not under threatening situations. The societal orientation of collective fear is described as cutting deeply into the psychology of individual society members and as becoming linked with a social ethos of conflict, while causing mistrust and delegitimization of the opponent (Bar-Tal, Halperin & de Rivera, 2007). Collective fear orientation, then, tends to limit the perspective of members of the society by binding the present to past experiences and by building expectations for the future exclusively on the basis of the conflictual past (Bar-Tal, Halperin & de Rivera, 2007).

In contrast to work on fear, anger, and other negative emotions is the classic work by Kelman that implements and evaluates problem-solving workshops between Israelis and Palestinians. Kelman points particularly to the importance of feelings of sympathy and empathy in mitigating conflict and finding paths to peace and reconciliation (Kelman, 1999). The importance of trust and sympathy for reconciliation continues to be a focus of recent research in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Nadler & Liviatan, 2006; Steinberg & Bar-On, 2002).

However, research in this tradition has seldom examined *empirically* the role of emotions in supporting policy attitudes in an ongoing conflict. In the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the research most directly linking emotions with support of compromise policies has been conducted by Bar-Tal (2001). This research examined the relation between feelings of fear and hope and a generalized willingness to compromise as represented by self-identification as hawk versus dove in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Results indicated that Israeli Jews with less fear and those with more hope are more likely to self-identify as doves. Our study extends previous research by examining at the same time three types of feelings – sympathy, hostility, and fear – as predictors of support for compromise. Based on the research just reviewed, we expect that:

H2: Sympathy and hostility will be significantly associated with attitudes towards compromise, with higher hostility predicting decreased support for compromise and higher sympathy predicting increased support for compromise.

For fear, the prediction is not so straightforward, as we explain in the next section.

Threats and Feelings as Predictors of Support for Compromise

As evident from the above review, threat perceptions and feelings in conflict were mostly investigated, in previous studies, separately and within different traditions of research. The importance of our study is in examining threat and feelings at the same time, as predictors of support for compromise, and in assessing the extent to which *each* of the following five factors – perception of collective threat, perception of zero-sum intergroup relations, feelings of sympathy, feelings of hostility, and feelings of fear towards the outgroup – makes a distinct contribution to explaining Jewish-Israeli support for compromise with Palestinians.

However, before we go on to describe our research, it is important to further clarify the distinction we make in this study between the perception of collective threat and the feeling of personal fear from Palestinians.

Distinction Between Collective Threat and Personal Fear

Fear is usually understood as an aversive feeling that arises when one perceives a threat or danger to oneself or one's society and that enables an adaptive response (Gray, 1989; Rachman, 1978). Fear combines physiological and psychological reactions that had presumably evolved to maximize the probability of surviving in dangerous situations (Bar-Tal, 2001). Fear can motivate actions of defense or aggression against the source of the perceived threat; it can also lead to avoidance of risk, uncertainty, and novel situations (Bar-Tal, 2001; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Lazarus, 1991).

The distinction between threat and fear is not always clear or necessary. It is easy, in many contexts, to join threat and fear as part of the constellation that defines fear as an emotion – a constellation of perceived threat (cognition), experience of affect (fear), and action tendencies that include physiological arousal and fight or flight (Bar-Tal, 2001; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006). Indeed this multifactorial view is today perhaps the dominant conception of emotion (Lazarus, 1991; 2001).

Nevertheless, there are two conceptual differences between the perception of collective threat and the feeling of personal fear that are relevant to our study. First is the difference between cognition and affect: perception of threat is seen as more cognitive, whereas the experience of fear is more affective. Second is the difference between personal and group levels of analysis. Collective threat is conceptualized here at the intergroup level: to what degree do they threaten us (our group)? Whereas personal fear relates to the extent to which I, myself, feel fear toward them. Thus, there may be individual differences in the extent of fear in response to a given level of perceived threat (Ochsner et al., 2006). That is, we can agree that the enemy will attack at dawn, but I can be more afraid than you are.

Indeed, the distinction between personal fear and collective threat has also emerged in survey research (Huddy et al., 2002) that showed that each of these factors was associated with different cognitive and behavioral responses of US citizens to terrorism. Whereas personal fear was substantially related to personal behaviors to reduce risk, perceptions of collective-national threat were related to negative evaluations of the future of the national economy. Based on these indications that collective threat and personal fear may be usefully distinguished in some situations, we expect that:

H3: Perception of collective threat and feeling of personal fear will each make its own, independent contribution to explaining support for compromise.

The Five-Factor Threat and Feelings Model Predictions

In summary, our five-factor model predicts that:

H4: Each of the following five factors – representing threat from and feelings towards Palestinians – will make a distinct, independent contribution to predicting Jewish-Israeli support for compromise with Palestinians: perception of collective threat from Palestinians; perception of zero-sum relations with Palestinians; feelings of personal fear; feelings of sympathy; and feelings of hostility towards Palestinians.

Overview of Present Study

The goal of the present study is to examine factors that are associated with Jewish-Israeli attitudes towards compromise with Palestinians and, more specifically, to examine threats and feelings as potential predictors of these attitudes. Our study follows on earlier research (Maoz & McCauley, 2005) that explored the role of three factors – zero-sum threat, personal fear, and feeling of sympathy towards Palestinians – in predicting Jewish-Israeli attitudes towards resolving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The present study adopts a more fine-grained five-factor approach in which perception of collective threat from Palestinians was differentiated from perception of zero-sum relations between Israeli Jews and Palestinians. In addition, we examine here three kinds of feelings – fear, hostility, and sympathy. The present study also focuses more clearly on predicting support for concrete compromise solutions that appear in current Jewish-Israeli discussions of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and that are considered by Israeli Jews as possible venues for achieving peace through compromise. This means including a wider range of concrete compromise options and excluding items that represent more general opinions about the conflict and the likelihood of resolving it.

Also, in the present study we examine the role of religiosity as a predictor of support for compromise. Previous studies of Jewish-Israeli public opinion (e.g. Yuchtman-Yaar & Hermann, 1997; Hermann & Yuchtman-Yaar, 2002) found that religiosity is strongly related to unwillingness to compromise with Palestinians. However, the meaning of this association is not clear. In other words, it is not conceptually clear what religiosity stands for or represents that decreases compromise support. The present study expands our understanding by relating religiosity with threat perceptions and feelings as explanations of support for compromise.

Method

Sample

Telephone interviews (N = 504) were conducted by the Machshov Research Institute with a representative sample of adult Jewish Israelis on 23–29 June 2003. The survey included one set of items measuring the respondents' attitudes toward various possible solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and another set of items that assessed the respondents' emotions toward and beliefs about Palestinians. The questionnaire was administered in Hebrew after being translated from and back-translated to English to ensure accuracy. The items analyzed in this study are described below.

Attitudes Toward Compromise Solutions

Attitudes toward solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict were assessed by presentation of an inventory of five solutions – each described by a brief text. Respondents were asked to rate agreement with each solution on a 6-point bipolar scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (*1*) to *strongly agree* (*6*). The solution inventory included three two-state or quasi-two-state solutions (establishing a Palestinian state alongside the Jewish State of

Israel) (see Table I) that had appeared in our previous polling study (Maoz & McCauley, 2005).

In addition, the respondents were asked about two other solution policies that are discussed in the context of the conflict between the sides. One was the *Roadmap Solution* presented by US government officials in April 2003 (US Department of State, 2003). The second was *Binational Jewish–Arab State* – a solution that involves compromising the Jewish character of the state of Israel; this solution is usually attributed to extreme left-wing parties in Israel.

These five items are detailed below.

1967 Lines: Jerusalem Under Israeli Sovereignty 'Within the framework of a peace agreement, Israel will withdraw from the territories to the 1967 lines, with territorial adjustments taking into account Israeli security needs. Jerusalem will stay under Israeli sovereignty, a Palestinian state will be established, and the Palestinians will commit themselves to prevent terror acts against Israelis.'

1967 Lines: Two Capitals in Jerusalem 'Israel will withdraw from the territories to the 1967 lines, with territorial adjustment taking into account Israeli security needs. A Palestinian state will be established and in Jerusalem there will be two capitals – an Israeli capital in the Western part and a Palestinian capital in the Eastern part. The Palestinians will commit themselves to prevent terror acts against Israelis.'

Roadmap Leading to Palestinian State 'Within the framework of a peace agreement, in the first phase a provisional Palestinian state will be established in the Gaza strip and around 40% of the West Bank. In the second phase an independent, democratic Palestinian state will be established with mutual Israeli–Palestinian agreement on borders, Jerusalem, and Jewish settlements. Palestinians will commit themselves to prevent terror acts against Israel.'

Unilateral Withdrawal 'Israel will unilaterally withdraw from territories in the West Bank and Gaza to secure lines. Three major clusters of settlements will stay inside Israel: the Ezion bloc, the area of Jerusalem, and the area of Ariel. The Jordan Valley will be also under Israeli security control. A security fence will be constructed that will prevent unmonitored passing from the territories to Israel. Isolated settlements will be evacuated or transferred to clusters of settlements.'

Binational State 'A binational Jewish–Arab state in the whole area of Palestine (Erez Israel).'

Beliefs About and Feelings Toward Palestinians

Respondents also completed scales constructed by the authors to measure threat perceptions and emotions related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Each scale was based on two to four items rated on a bipolar scale ranging from *strongly disagree (1)* to *strongly agree (6)*. Responses to relevant items were averaged for each respondent to form five scales, where higher scores mean more agreement with the relevant threat perception or feeling toward Palestinians.

These five scales were: the *Collective Threat Scale* ('It's possible to trust Palestinians' (reversed), 'I am concerned that the state of Israel will suffer from waves of Palestinian terror attacks', 'In my opinion, the majority of Palestinians would have destroyed the State of Israel if they could', and 'Most of the Palestinians hate Jews'); the *Zero Sum Scale* ('In the Israeli–Palestinian conflict nothing can be done that's good for both sides, whatever is good for one side is bad for the other side', 'One can think of a future in which both Israelis and Palestinians will gain

from cooperation between them' (reversed), 'Anything that happens that's good for the Israelis – must be bad for the Palestinians', and 'Anything that happens that's good for the Palestinians – must be bad for the Israelis'); the *Personal Fear Scale* ('I am afraid that I or my family will be injured in Palestinian terror attacks', 'I am afraid to be in crowded places when there is a warning about a terror attack' and 'I feel fear toward Palestinians'); the *Hostility Scale* ('I feel hate towards Palestinians', 'I feel anger toward Palestinians'); and the *Sympathy Scale* ('I feel liking toward Palestinians', 'I feel understanding toward Palestinians'). Table II presents Cronbach alphas, means, and standard deviations for each of the five scales.

Demographic Items

In addition, respondents answered questions regarding sociodemographic information such as gender, religiosity, and education.

Results

Support for Compromise

Means and standard deviations of the compromise-solution ratings appear in Table I. It is clear that the most acceptable solution is *Unilateral Withdrawal*: mean 3.7 and percentage of support (sum of *4*, *5*, and *6* responses) 58%. The least acceptable solutions are *1967 Lines – Two Capitals in Jerusalem* and *Binational State*: means 2.5 and 2.1, percentage of support 27% and 17%. In between these two poles we find the *Roadmap* and *1967 Lines – Jerusalem under Israeli Sovereignty*: means 3.3 and 3.2, percentage of support 48% and 44% respectively.

The ordering of these items resembles previous results (Maoz & McCauley, 2005) in which *Unilateral Withdrawal* was highly preferred in Jewish-Israeli public opinion and *1967 Lines – Two Capitals in Jerusalem* was the least preferred solution.

Comparing the 2002 and the 2003 polling results in terms of support for specific solutions, Table I indicates that mean agreement with the three solutions that appeared in both sets of data (*Unilateral Withdrawal, 1967 Lines – Two Capitals in Jerusalem*, and *1967 Lines – Jerusalem under Israeli Sovereignty*) changed little over time. Percentage of support for each item was also similar for 2002 and 2003 (58%, 27%, and 44% in 2002; 53%, 25%, and 49% in 2002). In addition, results of more recent polling studies indicate that Jewish-Israeli support for major solution formulas such as the two-state solution in 2005 and in 2006 are similar to those found in our 2003 survey (Shamir & Shikaki, 2006).

Table I. Correlations, Means (SDs) for Compromise Items

	2	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*Mean(SD) 2003*	*Mean(SD) 2002*
1. 1967 Jerusalem one capital	*.56*	*.57*	*.32*	*.21*	*.78*	3.2 (1.7)	3.5(1.9)
2. 1967 Jerusalem two capitals		*.58*	*.28*	*.31*	*.79*	2.5 (1.7)	2.4(1.7)
3. Roadmap			*.31*	*.29*	*.80*	3.3 (1.7)	
4. Unilateral withdrawal				.08	*.58*	3.7 (1.6)	3.6(1.8)
5. Binational state					*.51*	2.1 (1.4)	
6. Support for compromise scale						3.0 (1.1)	

N = 496–501 because of omitted responses. Correlations in italics are $p < .01$ (two-tailed). Rightmost column shows means and SDs for three items used also in 2002 survey. All measures on 1–6 scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. SPSS software was used to generate the statistical results of this study.

Support for Compromise Scale

Responses to the five solution items were averaged for each respondent to form the Compromise Scale, where higher scores mean higher support for compromise solutions (mean = 3.0; SD = 1.1, Alpha = .74).

Threat and Feelings as Predictors of Support for Compromise

Four of our five scales showed strong zero-order correlations with the Compromise Scale (Table II): –.54 for Collective Threat, –.45 for Zero Sum, .48 for Sympathy, and –.33 for Hostility. Personal Fear was not significantly correlated (–.04) with willingness to compromise.

A regression model using the two threat perception scales and the three feeling scales to predict respondents' scores on the Compromise Scale (Model 1; see Table III) produced a statistically significant (adjusted) R^2 = .39 [F (5, 498) = 65.8, p < .001]. Four of our scales made independent contributions to the overall explanatory power of the model. Respondents with lower scores on the Zero Sum Scale and the Collective Threat Scale and respondents with higher scores on the Sympathy Scale and the Personal Fear Scale showed increased Support for Compromise (see Model 1, Table III). It is interesting to note that Personal Fear had a small but positive relation with support for compromise in the regression model, although its zero-order correlation with the Compromise Scale was an insignificant –.04. Possible implications of this result will be elaborated in the discussion section. Contrary to our expectations, the Hostility Scale did not have a significant independent contribution to predicting support for compromise with Palestinians (see Model 1, Table III).

A hierarchical regression analysis indicated that when the Hostility Scale, the Sympathy Scale, and the Personal Fear Scale are entered together at the first step as predictors (Model 2, see Table III), Sympathy and Hostility make significant independent contributions to predicting Support for Compromise. When adding the Collective Threat Scale and the Zero Sum Scale as predictors to the model, however (see Model 1, Table III), the Sympathy Scale remains a significant independent predictor and Personal Fear becomes a significant predictor, but the Hostility Scale no longer significantly predicts Support for Compromise. Furthermore, another hierarchical regression analysis indicates that, when the Hostility Scale is entered alone at the first step as a predictor (Model 3, see Table III), it makes

Table II. Means (SDs) and Intercorrelations of Threat and Feeling Scales, Compromise Scale and Religiosity Item

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*Mean (SD)*
1. Collective threat (4)	*.70*							4.5 (1.0)
2. Personal fear (3)	*.29*	*.71*						3.8 (1.2)
3. Zero sum (4)	*.49*	*.18*	*.75*					3.0 (1.1)
4. Sympathy (2)	*–.49*	–.10	*–.41*	*.49*				2.6 (1.1)
5. Hostility (2)	*.49*	*.27*	*.35*	*–.41*	*.61*			3.7 (1.3)
6. Compromise scale (6)	*–.54*	–.04	*–.45*	*.48*	*–.33*	*.74*		3.0 (1.1)
7. Religiosity (1)	*.29*	.13	*.29*	*–.35*	*.29*	*–.44*		3.3 (1.1)

N = 482–504 because of omitted responses. Correlations in italics are p < .01 (two-tailed). Number of items for each scale in parentheses. Correlations in italics on diagonal are Cronbach alphas of the corresponding scales. All measures on 1–6 scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, except Religiosity on 1–4 scale.

Table III. Predictors of Support for Compromise, Standardized Coefficient Values (and Significance of p Values)

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*
Collective threat	–0.36 (0.001)	–	–	–0.40 (0.001)	–0.33 (0.001)	–0.31 (0.001)
Personal fear	0.13 (0.001)	0.05 (0.19)	–	–	–	–
Zero sum	–0.19 (0.001)	–	–	–0.23 (0.001)	–0.18 (0.001)	–0.15 (0.001)
Sympathy	0.23 (0.001)	0.42 (0.001)	–	–	0.25 (0.001)	0.19 (0.001)
Hostility	–0.03 (0.42)	–0.18 (0.001)	–0.33 (0.001)	–0.06 (0.18)	–	–
Religiosity	–	–	–	–	–	–0.24 (.001)
Adjusted R^2	0.39	0.26	0.11	0.34	0.38	0.42

a significant independent contribution to predicting Support for Compromise. When adding the Collective Threat Scale and the Zero Sum Scale as predictors to the model, however (Model 4, see Table III), the Hostility Scale no longer significantly predicts Support for Compromise. Thus, it seems that hostility feelings do not predict Support for Compromise beyond what threat perceptions can predict.

Religiosity as Predictor of Support for Compromise

Most of the demographic measures that we examined (gender, years of education) were unrelated or very modestly related to the Support for Compromise Scale. Support for Compromise was, however, as expected, strongly associated with Religiosity (1 = *secular* to 4 = *very religious*), with the more religious respondents on average reporting lower levels of Support for Compromise (Table II, $r = -.44$).

To examine the ability of Religiosity to predict Support for Compromise beyond and independently from our psychological variables, we produced a hierarchical regression model in which we entered together, at the first step, our three major significant psychological predictors: the Threat Scale, the Zero Sum Scale and the Sympathy Scale (Model 5, see Table III). Adding Religiosity to this model (Model 6, see Table III) in the second step produced a significant but small increase in (adjusted) R^2 from .38 to .42 (F change (1, 499) = 41.9, $p < .001$). The small size of this increment in prediction power indicates that Religiosity has limited power to predict Support for Compromise beyond and independently of the explaining power of Threat and Sympathy.

Discussion

Our study was designed to learn more about the extent to which threat perceptions and intergroup emotions can predict attitudes toward political compromise in a situation of protracted ethnic conflict: the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. As we expected, we found that *both* threat perceptions and intergroup feelings made significant and independent contributions to explaining variation in support for compromise. Furthermore, the present study succeeded in distinguishing three aspects of threat – perception of collective threat, perception of zero-sum, and feelings of personal fear. Each of these three measures, as well as our measure of sympathy towards Palestinians, offered unique value in predicting support for compromise. However, hostility towards Palestinians did not

make a significant independent contribution to this prediction.

Collective Threat as Predictor of Willingness to Compromise

As described in the introduction, a major factor that has been consistently found as explaining support for less compromising and more extreme, aggressive, and belligerent policies towards outgroups is perception of outgroup collective threat. Perceiving the opponent as threatening one's own side has been repeatedly found as strongly associated with decreased willingness to compromise and make concessions to the other side (Arian, 1989; Gordon & Arian, 2001; Maoz & McCauley, 2005) and with higher support for retaliatory belligerent and aggressive policies towards the outgroup (Huddy et al., 2005).

In our study, Palestinian threat to Israelis was assessed with a scale that included items about the hostile motives of Palestinians (hate Jews, would destroy Israel if they could, untrustworthy) and perception of Palestinian capability (concern about waves of Palestinian terror attacks on Israel). Taken together, these four items offer an approximate index of security threat from Palestinians, both their bad intentions and their capability of carrying out terror attacks. It is important to note here that while consistently with our previous line of research (Maoz & McCauley, 2005; Maoz & McCauley, 2008) and with other studies – mostly in the tradition of political science (Gordon & Arian, 2001; Huddy et al., 2002) – we define this measure as 'Collective Threat', other and major psychological approaches to collective emotions in conflict describe similar measures and phenomena as 'Collective Fear' (Bar-Tal, 2001; Bar-Tal, Halperin & de Rivera, 2007; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006).

A second aspect of the Palestinian threat to Israelis is the perception of the relations of Palestinians and Israelis as a zero-sum game, such that any gain for one side must be a loss of equal size for the other side. Our Zero Sum Scale included four items with the idea that nothing can be done and nothing can happen that is good for both sides, that what is good for one side is bad for the other. The Collective Threat and Zero Sum scales were substantially correlated in our results (.49), but these two scales showed independent value in predicting support for compromise policies.

Conceptually, the perception of zero-sum relations can be independent of the perceived threat posed by the intentions and capability of the enemy. 'They' could have bad intentions and strong capability for harming 'us', despite the possibility of mutual advantage from cooperation (the USA and USSR before 1991). Or 'they' could be seen as having a zero-sum relation with 'us' despite their having positive motives toward 'us' and no capability for harm (US whites' view of the Cherokee before evicting the Cherokee from their lands in Georgia in the 1830s [Chirot & McCauley, 2006: 12, 20–22]).

Thus, our threat scales differentiated a perception of the Palestinians in terms of hostile intention and capability of harm – the Palestinian threat to Israeli Jews – and an abstract perception of the nature of the intergroup relation between Palestinians and Israelis. The first, as already noted, represents an assessment of the security threat that is the focus of attention in political science and international relations. The second represents an assessment of intergroup relations that is the focus of many laboratory studies of individual and group choice that show the corrosive effects of perceiving zero-sum relations with others (Thompson, 1995).

We believe that the present study is the first polling research to distinguish perception of collective threat from perception of zero-sum collective relations. Collective threat depends on a negative appraisal of enemy intentions joined with a positive appraisal of enemy

capability; zero-sum thinking is a negative appraisal of the intergroup situation. Distinguishing these two aspects of intergroup threat may be useful for understanding the psychology that supports intergroup conflicts and violence, especially in protracted ethnic conflict such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Collective Threat versus Personal Fear

Another aspect of the Palestinian threat to Israelis was personal fear. The Personal Fear Scale included items about fearing crowded places after a terror alert, fear of injury to self and loved ones from terror attack, and fear of Palestinians. Personal Fear was only weakly correlated with the Collective Threat and Zero Sum scales (.29 and .18) and not at all correlated with willingness to compromise (–.04), as compared with the strong correlation of Threat with Support for Compromise (–.54), thus establishing that Personal Fear and Collective Threat are distinct constructs in our study.

It is also interesting to note that Personal Fear provided a small but significant contribution to the regression predicting willingness to compromise. Surprisingly, the regression coefficient was positive: the unique contribution of personal fear was that higher fear was associated with more positive attitude toward compromise. This unpredicted result must be treated tentatively unless and until it is replicated, but it does agree with our expectation that perception of collective threat and feeling of personal fear will each make its own independent contribution to explaining support for compromise.

Our findings also resonate with the findings of a study by Huddy et al. (2005) that discriminated between perceived terrorist threat and feelings of fear and anxiety in relation to terrorist attacks on the USA. Interestingly, Huddy et al. (2005) find that while perceived terrorism threat *increases* support for aggressive anti-terrorism policies, feelings of fear and anxiety are associated with *less* militant attitudes and with *lower* support for aggressive action aimed at countering terrorism.

Terrorism is often thought of as a strategy of coercion, 'Kill one man and frighten a thousand'. It is easy to assume that terrorists succeed to the extent that their attacks produce fear among the citizens of the state that the terrorists are acting against. Our results suggest – as Huddy et al. (2005) also suggest – that the impact of terrorism is more complex, that there are different kinds of threat perception. Increased personal fear may have the result that terrorists seek: at least a small increase in willingness to compromise with the terrorists. But, in our results, increased threat to the group is strongly associated with resistance to compromise with terrorists.

Theoretically, our results and those of Huddy et al. (2005) indicate the weak role of individual self-interest in determining opinions about group-level issues, including intergroup conflict. This is not a new idea. Kinder (1998) has summarized a broad array of evidence indicating that political opinions are more group-centered than individual-centered. Individuals react to policies in terms of the implications for groups they care about, rather than in terms of self-interest. This perspective is what makes sense of individuals willing to give their lives for a cause they care about, whether in terrorist acts or in fighting terrorist acts.

Indeed, our results remind us that there is a long tradition in social psychology that group dynamics are not just the sum of individual dynamics, that intergroup phenomena may require new theory rather than just the projection of individual level theories (e.g. Allport, 1954: 31–40, on 'The Group Mind', and Bar-Tal, Halperin & de Rivera, 2007, on collective emotions and emotional climate). This tradition is often overlooked, as when analyses of suicide bombers focus on the individual frustrations of the bombers rather than on the

frustrations of group goals that the bombers identify with (for critiques of such analyses, see Krueger & Maleckova, 2003; McCauley, 2002b). Thus, we emphasize here that our results make sense if one starts from the assumption that group-level policy preferences, such as willingness to compromise with a threatening outgroup, depend upon perceptions of intergroup relations rather than perceptions of personal relations. Willingness to compromise is reduced to the extent that threat to the ingroup is perceived as high and the intergroup relation seen as zero-sum. Willingness to compromise is little affected, and perhaps even increased, to the extent that there is a feeling of high personal fear.

Sympathy and Hostility Toward Palestinians as Predictors of Support for Compromise

Sympathy toward Palestinians offered unique value in regression predictions of willingness to compromise. This positive relation between sympathy and willingness to compromise is significant in the light of the considerable literature pointing to the importance of sympathy and empathy as an antidote to intergroup hostility and violence (Kelman, 1999; Staub, 2000; Nadler & Liviathan, 2006; Steinberg & Bar-On, 2002). Contact-based interventions for peace building, in particular, typically emphasize development of understanding and sympathy for the 'enemy' (Kelman, 1999; Maoz, 2000). Of course, contact does not always bring sympathy, and the difficulty of generalizing feelings for individuals to feelings for groups is a continuing issue in the literature on the effects of intergroup contact (McCauley, 2002a; Pettigrew, 1998). Nevertheless, our results indicate the potential power of sympathy as a contribution to willingness to compromise and suggest the value of future research to learn how sympathy for a threatening outgroup may be developed with or without personal contact with 'enemy' individuals.

Our findings also indicate that feelings of hostility towards the other side (i.e. anger and hatred) make a significant and independent contribution to predicting compromise support when threat perceptions are not included as predictors. However, we find that when threat perceptions are entered into the prediction model, hostility no longer makes an independent significant contribution to the prediction. Thus, interestingly, while sympathy does prove to be an independent predictor of support for compromise, beyond threat perceptions, feelings of hostility do not add to the explanatory power of threat.

Religiosity as a Predictor of Support for Compromise

As expected, religiosity was a significant predictor of support for compromise with Palestinians. This result is consistent with previous studies in which religiosity was found to be associated with higher political intolerance and more negative and less compromising attitudes towards outgroups (Gibson, 1992; Hermann & Yuchtman-Yaar, 2002; Pedahzur & Canetti-Nisim, 2004). However, our study explicates the relationship between religiosity, threat, and feelings in predicting support for compromise by showing that religiosity makes only a small contribution to this prediction beyond what threat perceptions and sympathy can explain. Thus, it seems that much of the tendency of our more religious respondents to oppose compromise can be understood in terms of their perceiving more threat from Palestinians and feeling less sympathy toward Palestinians. Additional research will be required to test the strength and generalizability of this interpretation.

Limitations of the Study

As cross-sectional survey research, our study has its limitations. Clearly, correlational data cannot be seen as cause and effect relationships. Nevertheless, in our regression analysis we have identified one measure (Support

for Compromise) as our dependent variable and the other measures (threats and feelings) as the independent variables or predictors, thus implying a causal interpretation. We acknowledge that the most that we can say with certainty is that our results are consistent with a causal model but cannot be taken as establishing a causal interpretation.

Another limitation of our study is that we focus on the emotional experience of individuals, whether in response to personal fear or in response to group or collective threat. The important recent line of research introduced by Bar-Tal (2001, 2007; Bar-Tal, Halperin & de Rivera, 2007), concerns the relation of individual experience of fear to a more general, societal, 'climate of fear'. We believe that a climate of fear differs from individual experiences of fear in that the climate of fear includes a perception that many other members of the ingroup are experiencing the same fear at the same time. This 'metacognition of fear' – fear reinforced and made normative by perception of shared fear (Bar-Tal, Halperin & de Rivera, 2007) – is beyond the scope of the conceptions and measures represented in our study.

Conclusion

Our results indicate that intergroup threat has three different aspects: a perception of collective threat based on the motives and capabilities of the outgroup, a perception of zero-sum relations with the outgroup, and the feeling of personal fear of the outgroup. Results also indicate that sympathy makes an independent contribution (beyond threat perceptions) in explaining support for compromise solutions. Finally, our results suggest that perception of personal fear, when reduced to its unique variance in a regression model that includes threat perceptions, may actually increase support for compromise policies. Taken together, these measures account for most of the reliable variation in Jewish-Israeli attitudes towards compromise with the Palestinians (R = .63, predicting Compromise measure with alpha reliability of .70). It seems possible that the combination of outgroup threat perceptions and intergroup emotions may be useful for understanding the psychological foundations of peace and war in other situations of intergroup conflict.

Perhaps the most hopeful aspect of our results is that sympathy toward Palestinians provided a unique and substantial contribution to predicting support of compromise policies with Palestinians. Feelings of sympathy for the enemy may also be crucial for developing support for peace and compromise in other situations of protracted intergroup conflict. The findings of our study indicate that even in situations of strong outgroup threat, sympathy towards the opponents can be independently and substantially associated with increased support for the peaceful resolution of a violent protracted conflict.

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IFAT MAOZ, b. 1961, PhD in social psychology (University of Haifa) is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel (2002–) and Director of the Smart Communication Institute; visiting scholar at the Psychology Department of Stanford University (1996) and in the Solomon Asch Center for Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict, at the University of Pennsylvania and Bryn Mawr College (2002–03, 2006–08); current main interests include psychological and media-related aspects in conflict and peace building.

CLARK MCCAULEY, b. 1943, PhD in social psychology (University of Pennsylvania) is Professor of Psychology and co-director of the Solomon Asch Center for Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict at Bryn Mawr College, co-director of the National Consortium for Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (NC-START), and editor of the journal *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*. With Dan Chirot he is author of *Why Not Kill Them All? The Logic of Mass Political Murder and Finding Ways of Avoiding It* (2006).