An analysis of changing Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards peace

Elisa Cavatorta[1] and Ben Groom[2]

About the Authors (100)

Elisa Cavatorta is a Reader in Economics at the Department of Political Economy, King's College London. Elisa's research focuses on the study of conflict and conflict-resolution, the determinants of individual preferences and beliefs, and willingness to negotiate and cooperate. She has a regional expertise in the Middle East region. Ben Groom is Professor of Economics at the University of Exeter and Visiting Professor at the Grantham Research Institute, London School of Economics. Ben's research focusses on the determinants of social preferences for intergenerational and intragenerational fairness and the measurement of social time preferences for of long-term decision-making.

Abstract (200 words)

A unique time series dataset is interrogated to show that among both Israelis and Palestinians support for peace negotiations was the majority view between 2000 and 2016, with an average of 73% and 65% support respectively. Yet, support is waning and in both populations the belief that a lasting peace would arise from peace negotiations is much lower at 35%. Distinct cohort effects exist with the 90s birth cohort in Palestine (Israel) having up to 15% (15%) lower support for peace negotiations and 20% (10%) lower belief that they will lead to lasting peace, compared to the 80s cohort at the same age. While we cannot claim causality, the 90s cohort effect is associated with their unique experience of violence and political turmoil in their younger years (Second Intifada, two Gaza wars, the Lebanon war, the breakdown of Sharm el-Sheikh), in line with empirical literature on the persistent effect of violence experienced as a young person on attitudes, beliefs and behaviour as an adult. Younger cohorts' experiences will be an important determinant of overall support for peace in the future and the prospects for peace in the region.

Acknowledgements

This work was funded by the Emirates Foundation under the project entitled "Palestinian Attitude Change in Response to Conflict in the Palestinian Territories". The authors gratefully acknowledge this funding. The authors would like to thank the staff of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Professor Khalil Shikaki and Walid Ladadwa for their continuous input throughout the project and sharing the data and Dr Guy Burton. We would also like to thank Negar Habibi, Manuel Linsenmeier and Leanne Cass for their expert research assistance in extracting and analysing the data, as well as Sandra Sfeir, Jack McGinn and Rob Lowe for their patience in overseeing the project and for their editorial guidance.

[1] Department of Political Economy, King's College London.
[2] Department of Economics, University of Exeter.

Introduction

Information about public opinions towards a peace process can be crucial to conflict resolution.[3] Public opinions underpin the legitimacy of negotiating positions and a nuanced understanding of the pattern in society, the history and the evolution over time of public opinion can help facilitate negotiations and resolutions.[4] Persistently low support for peace or peace negotiations, or dwindling beliefs that a peace process will lead to lasting peace, can severely impede political compromise and cause conflict to persist. Understanding how public opinions change as events (negotiations, spells of conflict, geo-political disruption) and socioeconomic, demographic and individual characteristics unfold over time helps identify how public opinions are formed, how support for peace is likely to evolve and the future prospects for conflict resolution.

In this report we use a unique Israeli (Israeli Democracy Institute, IDI) and Palestinian datasets (Palestinian Center for Political and Survey Research, PCPCR) to explore the levels of and trends in public opinions about peace negotiations in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza between 2000 and 2016. We focus on the key questions of whether members of the public 'support for the peace process/peace negotiations' and 'consider the outcome of peace plausible'. We chart the trends in these opinions over time and illustrate how these trends match up with important political events associated with either conflict (e.g. the Second Intifada or military interventions) or peace talks and peace summits. We analyse support for and beliefs about peace negotiations by age and cohort. The results show how political opinions have a positive 'age-effect': increase with age, and highlight important 'cohort-effects': the effect of specific birth cohorts' experiences on support for and beliefs about peace negotiations.

We find that in the period of study support for peace negotiations is the majority view among Palestinians and Israelis (65% and 73% respectively) but that there were worrying signs of declining support over time, particularly among younger cohorts (born between 1990 and 1999). Belief that the peace process will lead to long-lasting peace is low (between 20 and 30%). Beyond this, younger cohorts in the data had lower support for peace negotiations and less belief in the possibility of their success: between 10 and 20% lower for the 90s cohort for equivalent ages in adjacent cohorts. Reflecting an extensive literature documenting the persistent effects of experiencing violence as a young person, we argue that the 90s cohort is distinct because of its unique life-experience of violence and political turmoil in their younger years. Although not a causal finding their experience could have led to their distinctly lower support for peace negotiations and sceptical beliefs about their leading to peace, beliefs that could persist into adulthood. While support for peace up to 2016 remains the majority view among Israelis and Palestinians, the support for peace and beliefs of younger cohorts as they grow older will be an important determinant of prospects for peace in future years.

---

[3] Irwin, Colin. 1999. The People's Peace Process: Northern Ireland and the Role of Public Opinion Polls in Political Negotiations. Security dialogue, 30(3), 305-317. Irwin, Colin. 2005. A people's peace process for Bosnia and Herzegovina? Ethnopolitics, 4(3), 311-328.

[4] Fielding, David, & Penny, Madeline. 2009. What Causes Changes in Opinion About the Israeli Palestinian Peace Process? Journal of Peace Research, 46(1), 99-118.

The data

We use unique nationally representative repeated cross-sectional dataset of Israeli and Palestinian populations. The Israeli data come from the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) and the Palestinian data come from the Palestinian Center for Political and Survey Research (PCPSR). While other data sources do exist[5] the IDI and PCPSR data, provide the longest time series of data for questions that relate to the support for peace resolutions in Israel and Palestine.

Within each of the sources of data, PCPSR and IDI, there are questions which relate to the two different aspects of opinions about peace: 1) Support for peace negotiations or the peace process; and, 2) beliefs about whether peace negotiations will lead to a lasting peace or peace is possible.

Questions relating to support for peace negotiations

The IDI data of Israeli opinions consists of monthly polls undertaken since 1994. With regard to support for peace, the key question of interest is:

> "What is your position on conducting peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Authority?"

with only slight variations in the phrasing over the years.[6] This question has the following response options: Strongly oppose, Oppose, So-so, Support and Strongly support, Don't know/refuse. We consider someone supportive of peace negotiations if they indicated Support and Strongly support.

The PCPSR data of Palestinian opinions stem from quarterly polls undertaken since July 2000. For the most part, each year includes all four waves. The key question with regard to support for peace is:

> "Generally, do you see yourself as: supportive of peace process or opposed to peace process?"

This question has the following response options: Supportive of the peace process; Opposed to the peace process; Between support and opposition; Don't know/NA. This question is available since March 2006. We consider someone supportive of peace process if they indicated to be Supportive; the ambivalent answer, 'Between support and opposition' is classified as non-supporting as the response option implies some possible reservation.

---

[5] There are several other surveys of political opinion in Israel, The West Bank and Gaza, such as from The Palestinian Centre for Public Opinion (PCPO) or The Israel Democracy Institute (IDI). However, these surveys focus more on current events (e.g. the Russian-Ukraine war, Covid-19 Pandemic, political events in the region) and otherwise only provide short and/or interrupted time series data on the same set of questions over time. While some sources do have longer term series on matters related to the political issues of interest in this paper (e.g. the Pew Centre's data on support for a two-state solution) these are of insufficient length and frequency for our purposes compared to the PCPSR and IDI data that we use in this paper.

[6] For example, prior to 2003 the question was phrased "What is your position on conducting peace negotiations between Israel and the Arabs?".

Question about the belief that peace will arise

With regard to beliefs about whether or not peace is possible, for Israelis, the following question is analysed:

> "Do you believe or not believe that negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority will lead in the coming years to peace between Israel and the Palestinians?" with possible response options: Impossible, Uncertain, Somewhat, Certain, Don't know/refuse.

For Palestinians, the beliefs about the possibility for peace are analysed using the response to the following question:

> "Generally speaking, is it possible or impossible to reach these days a final status settlement with Israel?"

with possible response options: Definitely possible, Think is it possible, Think it is impossible, Definitely impossible, and Don't know/NA. We assume that the similarity in the sentiment behind these questions allows us to compare the beliefs of the two parties that negotiations will lead to peace in a consistent manner, both in levels and over time.

Other measures of public opinions on peace

There are few questions that are asked with sufficient frequency to analyse the evolution of public opinions central to this paper. One such question for which there is a long time series (since June 2000) in the Palestinian datasets, is the following:

> "Concerning armed attacks against Israeli civilians inside Israel, I …",

with response options: Strongly support; Support; Oppose; Strongly oppose; Don't know/NA. We aggregate answers into 'support' and 'oppose'. Carefully noting the shocking premise of this question, analysis of trends in responses to this question can cast light on the public support for peace negotiations since armed action is antithetical to the undertaking of the peace process or negotiations.

Data limitations and caveats to interpretation

Unfortunately, an embargo on the PCPSR data prevents us from using more recent polls. We are therefore able to analyse data until 2015 and restrict the analysis to a comparable period for the Israeli sample. The analysed data include 55 Palestinian polls and 262 Israeli polls.

As always with polls, caution is required in interpreting the responses to these questions. For instance, the phrasing: "Generally, do you see yourself as: supportive of the peace process or opposed to the peace process?" and "What is your position on conducting peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Authority?" means that the responses are susceptible to social desirability bias: respondents may feel pressured to answer in a socially acceptable manner rather than expressing their true

opinion. In addition, the outcomes (of the peace process or negotiations) implied by these questions are not specifically defined and respondents may have different outcomes in mind or attribute different probabilities of 'success' to the negotiations or peace process. These beliefs are likely to influence their stated support as typically people do not tend to support actions that are perceived fruitless. With these caveats noted, and ignoring small changes in the way that the questions are asked over time, we proceed under the assumption that these questions elicit useful and comparable (across regions and over time) information that measures the public opinions of interest here: support for peace negotiations and the belief that they will be successful.

Trends in support for peace negotiations

Changes over time in support for peace negotiation/peace process can arise from several different types of temporal change. First, there are social, political and geo-political events that affect society as a whole at a given point in time. The following Figures 1a, 1b and 2 illustrate 'period-effects' by matching political events to public opinions in particular years. Beyond the period-effects are potential 'age-effects', reflecting how attitudes change as people get older. Third, at any given time, specific cohorts (people with the same or similar birth years) may have different shared experiences and can develop common norms or behaviours. Finally, and relatedly, to the extent that there are cohort and age-effects, demographic changes (changes in the age structure of society) will also naturally alter observed average levels of support and belief over time.

In this section we show aggregate trends over time, and the associated period- and age-effects, of support for peace negotiations and the belief that they will lead to lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis for the period 2000 – 2016. In the subsequent section we disentangle these aggregate effects into birth-cohorts to illustrate the underlying determinants of time trends.

Support for peace negotiations over time: 'Period Effects'

Figure 1a shows that peace process is something Israelis and Palestinians have been wanting throughout the years and still want. Large majorities on both sides support undertaking peace negotiations: on average 65% of Palestinians and 73% of Israelis support or strongly support peace negotiations/peace process. There is however a declining trend over time, particularly since 2011. The data reveals discernible peaks and declines in relation to specific political events (military operations labelled in black and peace summits labelled in orange). Within the Israeli population, support for peace negotiations experienced significant drops during the Second Intifada. However, it showed signs of recovery in the last year of the Intifada, only to decrease again in the year following the disengagement from Gaza. Subsequently, there was an upward trend in support for negotiations between December 2008 and early 2010, which was followed by a relatively stable average until mid-2012, an upward trend thereafter and a steady decline over 2013 and 2014 until the Gaza War began in July 2014.

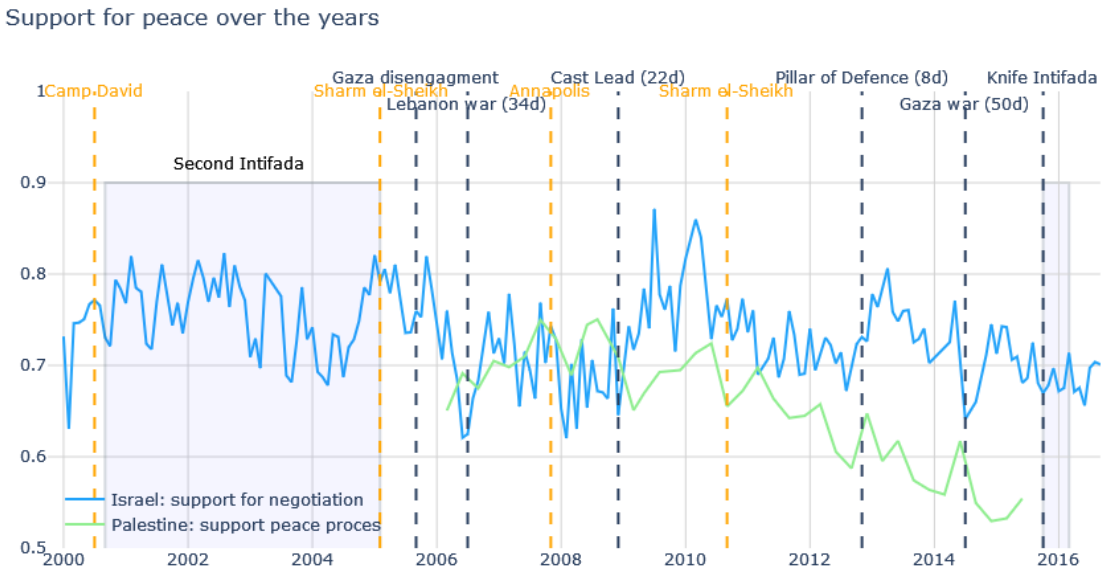

Figure 1a. Support for peace negotiations / the peace process over the years in Israel and Palestine (2000 – 2016)

Among the Palestinian population, support for the peace process demonstrated an increasing trend following the Lebanon war in 2006. However, this trend began to reverse from August 2008 to early 2009, coinciding with the aftermath of Israel's armed conflict in the Gaza Strip, known as Israel's Operation Cast Lead. There is a rebound in support during 2009 through mid-2010, coinciding with the period of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. These talks broke down in September 2010, after which there is a visible and rapid decline in support for the peace process.

The discernible decline in support for the peace process can be attributed to a drop in support among Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. Figure 1b disaggregates the Palestinian data by region and illustrates that the population in the Gaza Strip initially held higher rates of support for the peace process than their counterparts in the West Bank in September 2006. However, these rates began to decline in the aftermath of Operation Cast Lead and after the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, when direct peace talks broke down, eventually dropping below the rates of support observed in the West Bank population, with support falling below 50% of the Gazan population in 2015.

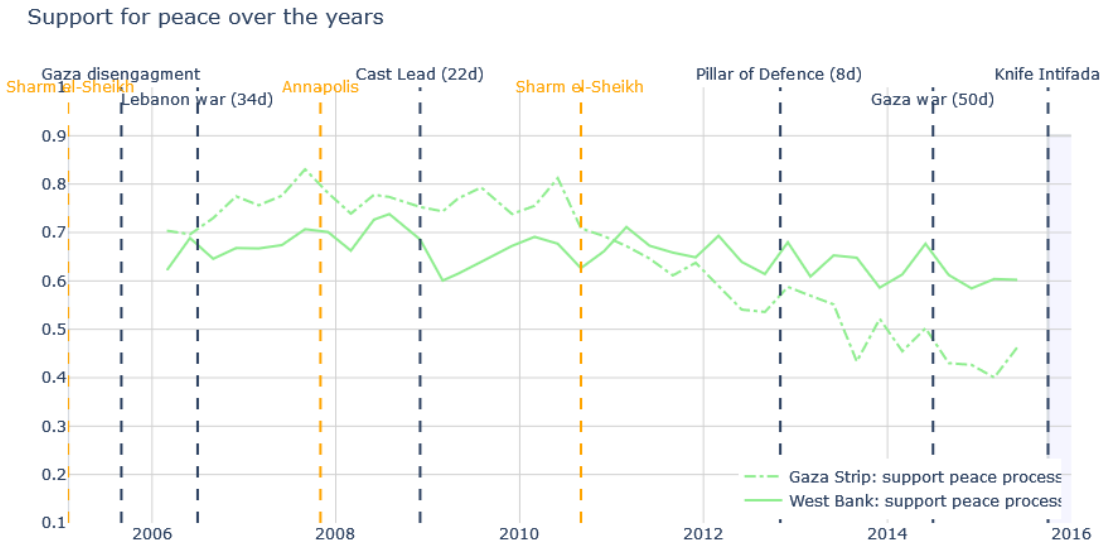

Figure 1b. Support for peace process among the public in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (2006 – 2015)

Beliefs that peace negotiations will lead to a lasting peace over time: 'period-effects'

Figures 1a and 1b shows that, support for peace negotiations/peace process remains the majoritarian (> 50%) view throughout the sampled years. However, Figure 2 shows that there is clearly some scepticism about the possibility that a lasting peace will be achieved via negotiations. Such beliefs are held by less than 50% of the Israeli and Palestinian populations for the period of study, and are declining from the high points in 2005, around the time of the Sharm el-Sheikh summit. This scepticism is remarkably similar on both sides and with few exceptions (and some differences due to fewer surveys on the Palestinian side), the proportion of Israelis believing that negotiations lead to lasting peace and the proportion of Palestinians believing that it is possible to reach a settlement with Israel are similar over time at around 30% since 2009.

Figure 2 shows how trends in these beliefs vary with conflict (events labelled in black) and peace summits (labelled in orange). The belief that peace is possible is lowest for the Israelis during the period of the Second Intifada and (also for Palestinians) after the break down of the Sharm el-Sheikh summit.

Opposition to armed action against civilians shows a clear increase among Palestinians since 2008, with the exception of a drop in the second part of 2014, concomitant with the Gaza War and a resurgence of violence, particularly from settlers, in the West Bank. In the years since 2010, the overall level of opposition is generally above the majority mark, between 50% and 60%. We leave to the reader to determine whether this figure is low given the shocking nature of the question asked.

Figure 2. Perceived likelihood that negotiations lead to peace / peace is possible over the years in Israel (blue) and Palestine (solid green) (2000 – 2016) and objection to armed action against Israeli civilians among Palestinians (dashed green)

Variation of support for peace negotiations and the belief that they will lead to a lasting peace by age: 'age-effects'

Figure 3 plots how support for peace negotiations and beliefs about the possibility for peace to arise vary with age for Israelis and Palestinians. The solid blue and green lines show the average level of support for peace across all surveys for Israelis and Palestinians respectively for people with the age shown on the x-axis. Plotted across all age groups in the surveys gives illustrates the 'age-effect'. For Israelis, support for peace (solid blue lines) increases noticeably with age starting at 60% for the average 20 year old in the sample and rising to 80% for the average 70 year old. For Palestinians, the level of support for peace (solid green line) is similar, ranging between 60 and 70%. For the average 20 year old Palestinian in the sample support is 60%. For the average 70 year old it is 70%. The age-effect on support for the peace process is stronger for Israelis than for Palestinians.[7]

The belief that negotiations will lead to peace / peace is possible also varies with age. For Israelis, the proportion of people at each age that think that 'peace is possible' (dashed blue line) is 30% for the average 20-year old in the sample and rises slowly with age to approximately 40% for the average 70 year old in the sample. For Palestinians these beliefs (dashed green line) also range from 30% and 40% but show less increase with age. The age-effect on the belief that peace is possible is stronger for Israelis than for Palestinians. We now disentangle these age-effects by decadal cohort.

[7] Note that the more variable lines for Palestinians is in part a consequence of fewer samples (quarters) to draw the averages from in our data.

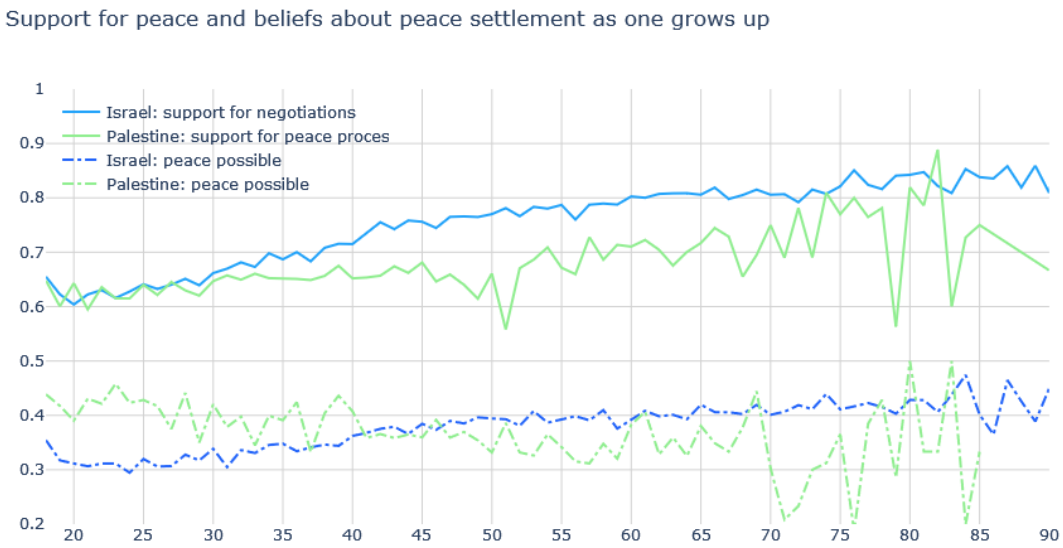

Figure 3. Support for peace negotiations and beliefs about the possibility to achieving peace in Israel (solid blue, dashed blue line) and Palestine (solid green line, dashed green line): the 'age-effect'

Cohort-effects as determinants of aggregate support for peace negotiations

Cohort effects are shared experiences for people born at more or less the same time. Examples of 'cohort effects' include the impacts of specific *eras* of 'socialisation' or exposure to specific social or economic environments. Groups experiencing these eras may then develop, for instance, common attitudes or norms of behaviour.One well-documented source of cohort effects stems from the experiences in early life, prior to becoming an adult.[8] The mechanics of this are as follows: If a particular event affects a group of young people (say adolescents between 10 and 17 years old) across society at a particular date, any changes in attitudes or norms arising from this shared experience would mean that these young people are different from people who were young before or after the event. This constitutes a cohort-effect and an extensive empirical literature documents these effects. Indeed, a variety of political or economic experiences during a person's early years have been shown to have long-term effects on individuals' attitudes and behaviour. Military service in Spain[9], nationally significant

[8] Arain, Mariam, Haque, Maliha, Johal, Lina, Mathur, Puja, Nel, Wynand, Rais, Afsha, Sandhu, Ranbir, & Sharma, Sushil. 2013. Maturation of the adolescent brain. Neuropsychiatric disease and treatment, 9, 449{461. Blakemore, Sarah-Jayne. 2012. Development of the social brain in adolescence. Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, 105(3), 111-116.

[9] Bagues, Manuel, and Christopher Roth. 2023. "Interregional Contact and the Formation of a Shared Identity." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 15 (3): 322-50**.** DOI: 10.1257/pol.20210237

corruption scandals in Italy[10], economic recessions[11], and natural disasters[12] have all been shown to shape individuals' preferences, trust, and attitudes towards environment and politics.

Among all experiences one might have as a young person, violence and conflict has been shown to have the most consistent and long-lasting effect on political opinions, beliefs and behaviour. Experiencing sectarian riots has been shown to affect levels of discriminatory behaviour as an adult.[13] Conflict, including civil wars and forced conscription or abduction into military service, affect political participation, voting patterns, labour market outcomes (e.g. wages) and lending behaviour inter alia.[14] These studies are summarised in more detail below, but their results clearly indicate that experiences as a young person -- early adulthood, adolescence and in 'early-life' -- are the relevant periods within which experiences of violence lead to persistent changes in attitudes. If such changes existed in Israel and Palestine, as a result of experiencing violence as a young person, they would manifest as cohort effects in our data.

In the rest of this section we disentangle the period-effects and age-effects shown in Figures 1a, 1b, 2 and 3 into decadal cohorts to visualise cohort effects over time and by age.

Variation over time of support for peace by birth cohorts: 'period-effects' and 'cohort-effects'

Figures 4a and 4b disentangle the estimates of the support for peace over time shown in Figure 1a by five mutually exclusive decadal birth cohorts from the 1950s up until the 1990s. Figure 4a shows that for Israelis successive cohorts have different levels

[10] Daniele, G., Aassve, A., & Le Moglie, M. (2023). Never Forget the First Time: The Persistent Effects of Corruption and the Rise of Populism in Italy. *The Journal of Politics*, *85*(2), 468–483. https://doi.org/10.1086/723019

[11] Bietenbeck, J., & Thiemann, P. (2023). Revisiting the effect of growing up in a recession on attitudes towards redistribution. *Journal of Applied Economics*, *38*(5), 786–794. https://doi.org/10.1002/jae.2970

[12] Falco, C., & Corbi, R. (2023). Natural disasters and preferences for the environment: Evidence from the impressionable years. *Economics Letters*, *222*, 110946. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2022.110946

[13] Fisman, R., Sarkar, A., Skrastins, J., & Vig, V. (2020). Experience of Communal Conflicts and Intergroup Lending. *The Journal of Political Economy*, *128*(9), 3346–3375. https://doi.org/10.1086/708856

[14] E.g. Blattman, C. (2009). From Violence to Voting: War and Political Participation in Uganda. *The American Political Science Review*, *103*(2), 231–247. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055409090212, Galdo, J. (2013). The Long-Run Labor-Market Consequences of Civil War: Evidence from the Shining Path in Peru. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *61*(4), 789–823. https://doi.org/10.1086/670379.

of support but also have different trends over time, with more recent cohorts having lower support which decreases quicker over time.

Figure 4b shows the same information for Palestinians although for only 4 decadal cohorts from 1960s to 1990s). Here there is less difference between the cohorts in terms of level and trend over time.

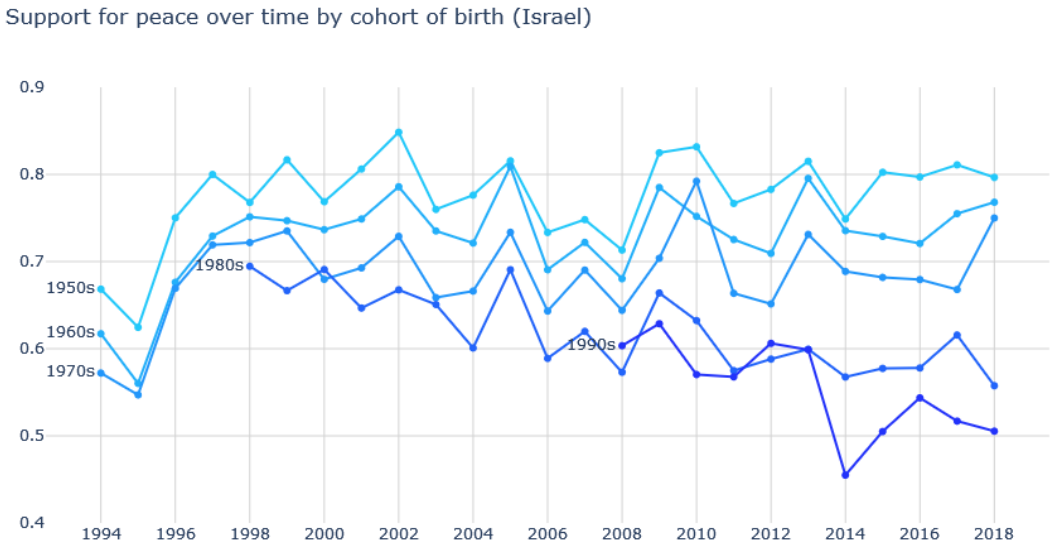

Figure 4a: Support for peace over the years among Israelis for different birth cohorts (1994 – 2018)

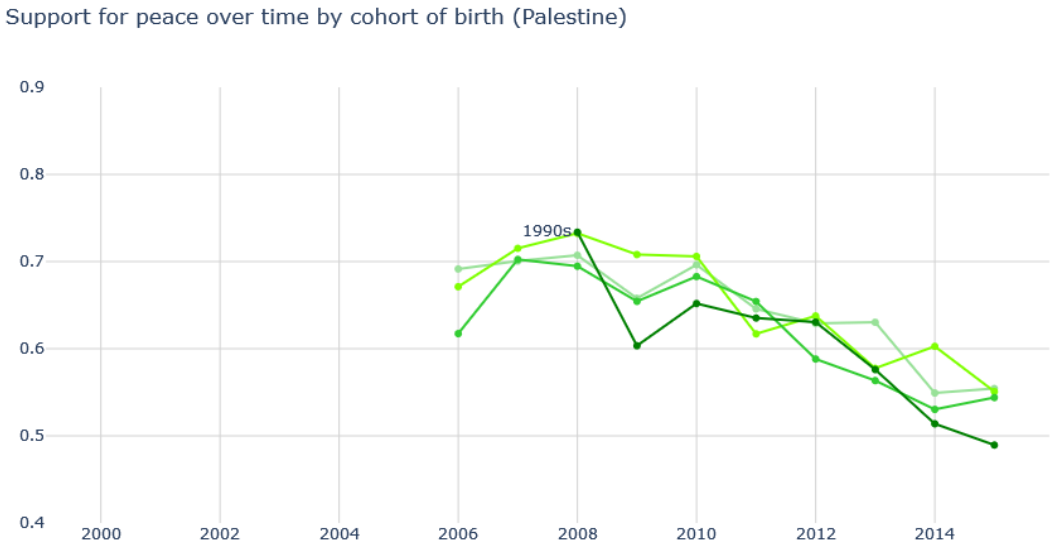

Figure 4b: Support for peace over the years (2006 – 2015) among Palestinians for different birth cohorts

The results suggest that ‘cohort effects’ and ‘period effects’ compound in explaining the declining trends in support for peace negotiations. Because the surveys only

interview adults aged 18 and over, the cohort composition of the national surveys changes as time passes. For example, the people born in the decade 1990-99 only enter the surveys from year 2008 onwards and their proportion gradually increases through time, from 3% in 2008 to 18% in 2015 for Israel and 21% for Palestine. By contrast, people born in the 1960s make up 26% of the sample in 2000 (25% in Israel), 20% in 2008 (17% in Israel) and 15% in 2015. The fact that newer cohorts have lower support for peace underpins the declines in support for and belief in the peace process over time via this compositional effect. Figures 4a and 4b suggest that this effect is stronger for Israelis than for Palestinians. Some of this effect arises due to an age-effect shown in Figure 3. We now disentangle the age-effect shown into decadal cohorts.

Variation with age of support for peace by birth cohorts: 'cohort-effects' and 'age-effects'

Figure 5a and 5b show the age-effect disaggregated by decadal cohorts (again, 50s – 90s) illustrating differences in the levels and the age-effect for these cohorts. First, for Israelis, different cohorts are associated with different 'baseline' levels of support at 18 years of age. The 1990-99 birth cohort have lower levels of support for peace negotiations at age 18 compared to earlier decadal cohorts: e.g. 60% among those born in the 90s cohort compared to 67% for the 70s cohort. For Palestinians, the 'baseline' levels at age 18 are instead comparatively similar across cohorts. As discussed, any given cohort's effect on the average response to the survey question changes over time in successive surveys as the proportion of older cohorts decreases in more recent samples compared to younger cohorts. Differences in attitudes across cohorts affect the trends over time.

Second, while Palestinians and Israeli samples differ with respect to the age-effect (Figure 3), there are also different age-effects across their decadal cohorts. For Israelis there are large differences in the age-effect. For the 50s and 60s cohorts of Israelis, the age-effect is positive and quite steep, suggesting that support for peace negotiations increases as people get older, at least in the cross section. However, for the 80s and 90s cohorts, not only is support lower but the age-effect is negative, which is the opposite of the effect on average shown in Figure 3. As this cohort becomes more prominent in successive samples if may mean that the positive age-effect shown in Figure 3 is reversed in the aggregate sample. A similar story can be told for Palestinians cohorts, for whom the age-effect is always negative (although less so for older cohorts). We return to the possible underlying causes of these effects below.

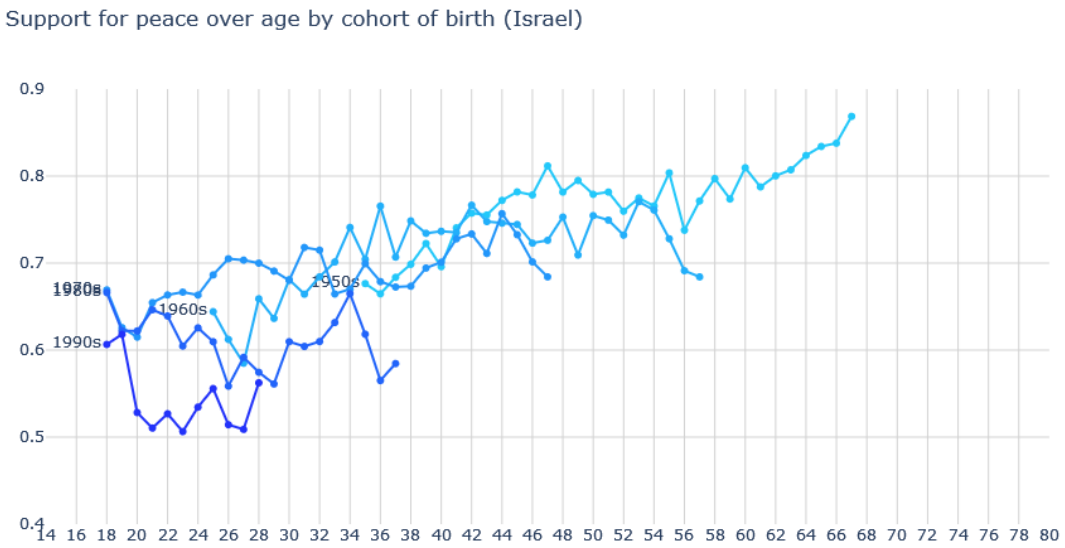

Figure 5a. Proportion of Israelis that support peace negotiations by age and decadal birth cohort.

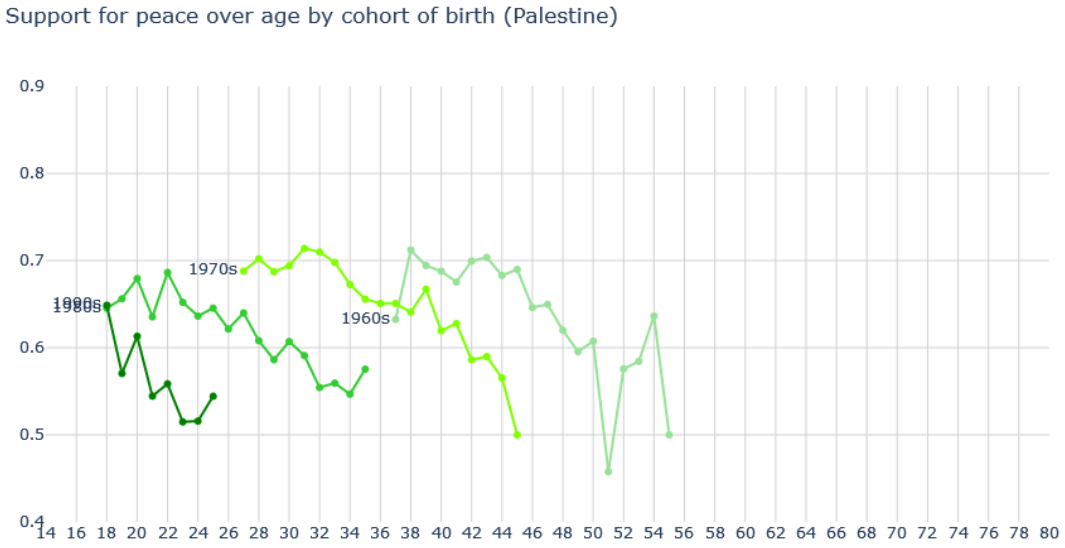

Figure 5b. Proportion of Palestinians that support peace negotiations by age and decadal birth cohort.

Cohort-effects as determinants of aggregate beliefs about peace negotiations

Variation over time of beliefs about the possibility of peace by birth cohorts: 'period-effects' and 'cohort-effects'

Figure 6a disentangles the trends and period-effects shown in Figure 2 on beliefs about negotiations leading to peace into the same five decadal cohorts as Figure 5a for Israelis: 50s through to 90s. In this way the cohort and period effects can be somewhat disentangled. Figure 6a shows that the trend in beliefs has distinct period effects e.g. in 1999 (year leading to the Camp David summit) and in 2005 (the end of the Second Intifada and the disengagement from Gaza) but in general is declining over time, as in Figure 3, and this effect is remarkably similar across all cohorts. There are distinct differences between cohorts in the levels of belief however, with later cohorts having lower levels of belief of around 20% compared to 40% for the 1950s cohort in 2016. The dispersion of beliefs between cohorts is larger in the latter part of the time series.

Figure 6b shows the period and cohort effects for the belief in peace being possible among Palestinians. Again, there are distinct period-effects in each year and yet the level and trend of beliefs is broadly similar across all cohorts.

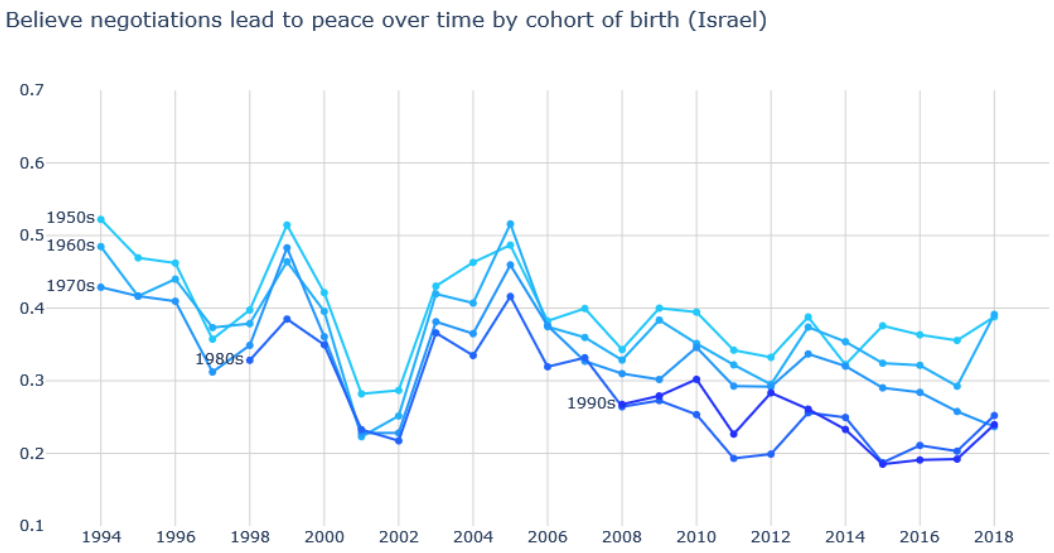

Figure 6a. Proportion of Israelis who believe that peace negotiations will lead to peace over time and decadal birth cohort (1994 – 2018)

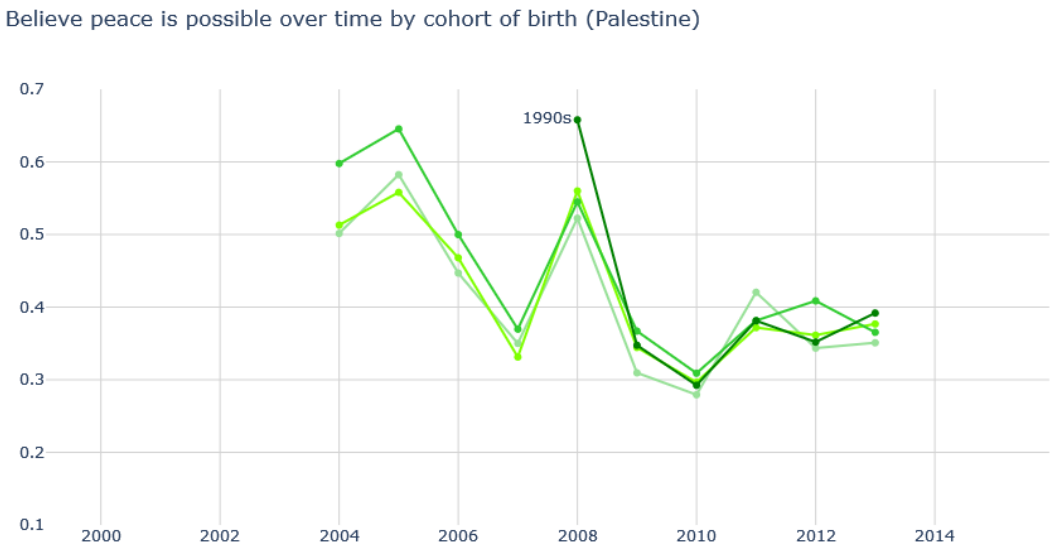

Figure 6b. Proportion of Palestinians who believe that a peace settlement is possible over time and decadal birth cohort (2004 – 2013)

Variation with age of beliefs about peace by birth cohorts: 'age-effects' and 'cohort-effects'

The proportion of people with the belief that negotiations can lead to peace show notable cohort and age-effects for both Israelis and Palestinians. Figure 7a shows that for Israelis, this belief tends to decline both with age and with successive cohorts. At the age of 26, a comparison between cohorts shows that this belief has dropped from around 45% for the 1960s birth cohort to less than 20% for the 1990s cohort. Figure 7b shows remarkable similar results for Palestinians. The 1990s cohort has approximately 10% lower levels of belief in peace being possible as a possibility than the 1980s cohort for comparable ages. Similarly extreme differences can be seen for other adjacent cohorts.

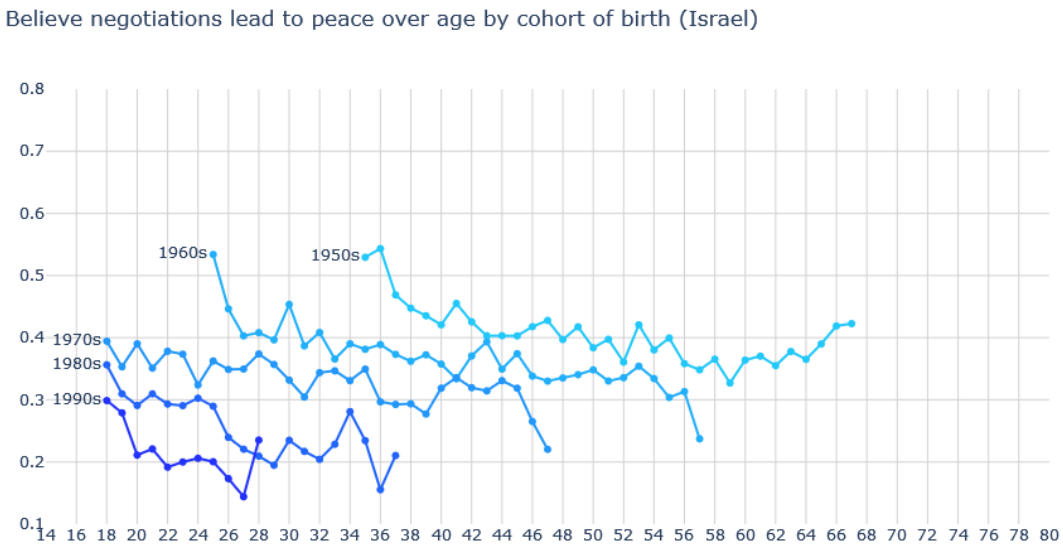

Figure 7a. Proportion of Israelis who believe that negotiations will lead to a peace settlement by age and decadal birth cohort

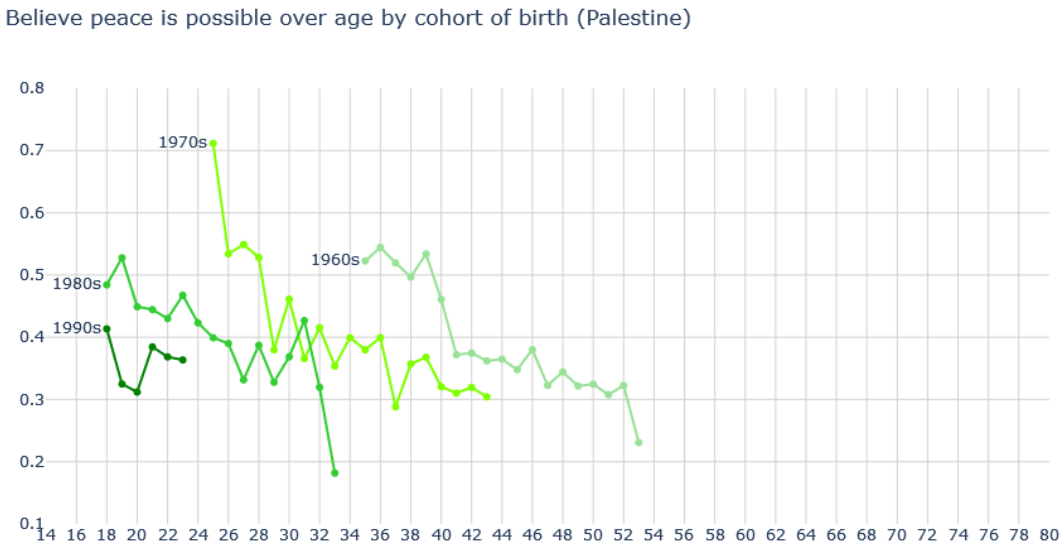

Figure 7b. Proportion of Palestinians who believe that a peace settlement is possible by age and decadal birth cohort

In summary, the distinct cohort and age-effects for Israelis and Palestinians, show that younger cohorts have lower levels of support and belief in the peace process along with weaker or even negative age-effects, which are not observed in the broader cross section of responses (see positive age effects in Figure 3).

Are cohort and age effects determined by trends in socio-economic factors?

The analysis so far has described the period, age and cohort effects associated with support for peace negotiations and the belief that they will lead to peace. It is possible that these trends can be explained by changes in observable factors that are also trending through time like, as discussed, demographic change or changes in important socioeconomic variables associated with the formation of attitudes and beliefs, such as education. The following analysis rules out these two explanations.

Figure 8a shows that the proportion of highly educated people, while always lower in Palestine than in Israel (between 10 and 20% compared to between 20 and 50% in Israel), has increased moderately over time in Palestine from 10% in 2000 to just over 20% in 2016 and from around 25% to nearly 50% in the same period in Israel. While this does represent a trend we find that support for peace is higher among the highly educated in general, so these trends cannot explain the declines on support and belief seen over time and in younger cohorts.

Figure 8b shows the proportion of people aged under 25 in Israel and Palestine as a means of testing the effect of demographic change. In Palestine this proportion has stayed remarkably constant over time, ranging between 20 and 25% of the population. In Israel this proportion is everywhere lower and has declined from approximately 20% in 2000 to between 5 and 10% in 2016. These data are surprisingly noisy however. Nevertheless, these changes in demography do not explain well the age-effect in Figure 3 because the demographics effects indicate fewer younger people within the representative sampling frame as time goes by yet Figure 3 indicates beliefs increase rise with age. We conclude that the reductions in support are coming from other socioeconomic factors or environmental phenomena.

This analysis is necessarily selective because of the paucity of socio-economic data in these surveys. Nevertheless, the analysis does most likely rule out demographic changes as being an artefactual source of the changes in support for peace negotiations and beliefs about their success witness in the period and cohort effects illustrated above. In the discussion below we explore life-experiences as the potential source of the distinct cohort effects.

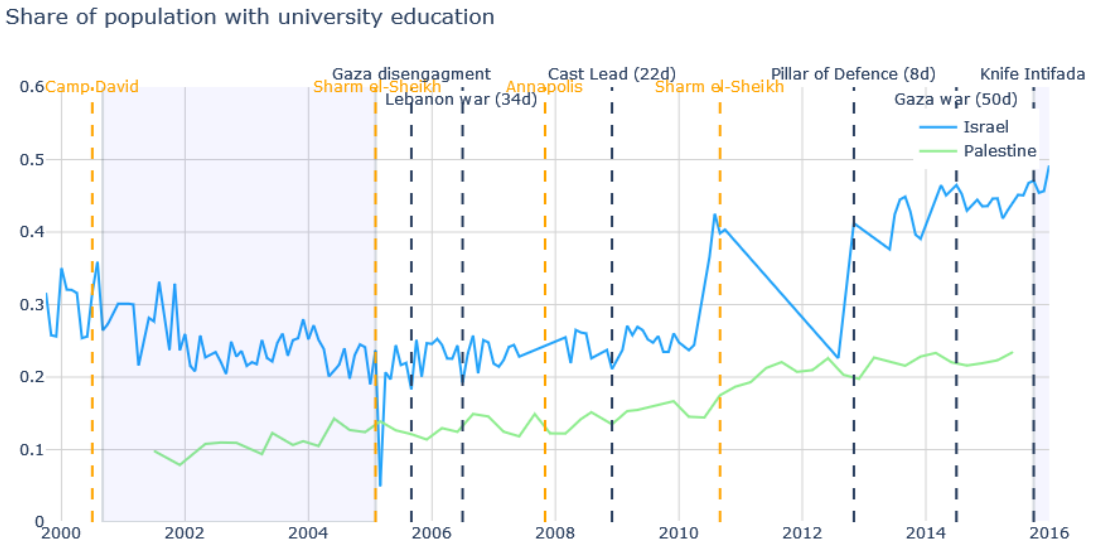

Figure 8a. Proportion of highly educated over time in Israel (blue line) and Palestine (green line) (2000-2016)

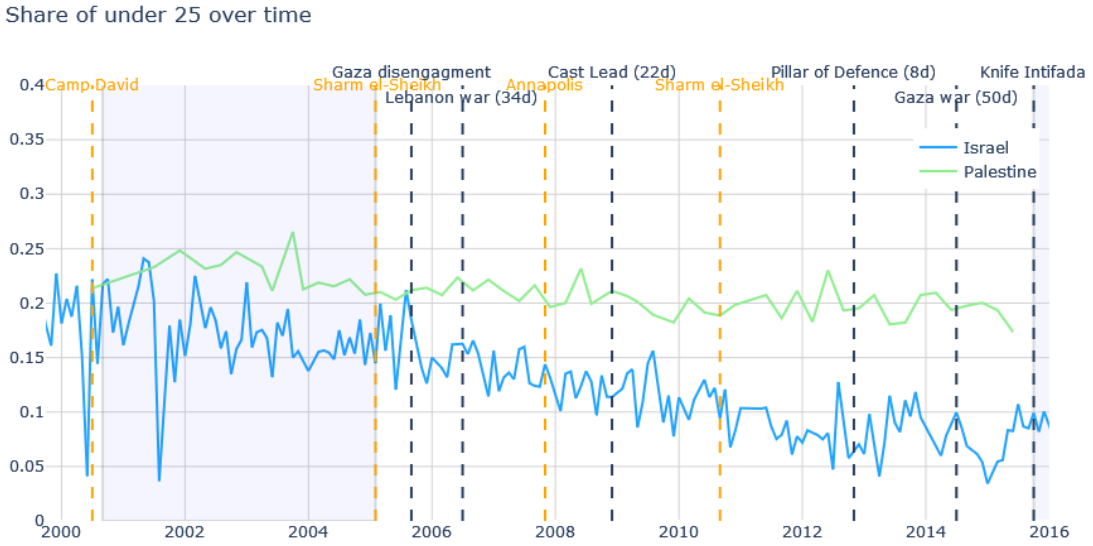

Figure 8b Proportion of population under 25 over time in Israel (blue line) and Palestine (green line) (2000-2016)

The impact of shared experiences of violence as a cohort-effect: Discussion

The striking cohort effects shown in Figures 5a, 5b and 7a and 7b on the support for peace negotiations and the belief that they will lead to peace suggest that the 90s birth-cohort could have formed different public opinions as a result of different shared life experiences than other cohorts. The literature on experiences in the early, pre-adult years suggests that experience of violence as a young person (non-adult) could underlie these differences between this cohort and adjacent ones in both Israel and Palestine. The literature on experience as a young person and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour that arise as an adult focuses on different developmental periods of young people's lives according to the psychological literature.[15] Some studies include experiences in the 'early-years': the first 3 years of life. Others include interim ages from infancy to 9 years old. One common focus, which defines a well-understood developmental phase in a young person's life, is adolescence: between the ages of 10 and 17. For similar reasons, a number of studies look at what is known as the 'impressionable years' (between 18 and 24 years old) of young adulthood.[16] In each case it is argued that experiences in these periods determine the formation of, or persistent changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours in the future. Many studies straddle these categories and consider ages from zero to young adulthood (0 to 24) or even 0 to 30 years old as abroad definition of younger years. We first describe this literature in general and then return to the evidence that is specific to the Middle East Region and the experiences of Israelis and Palestinians.

In early-life studies, where experiences from birth to infancy or adolescence are considered, exposure to violence has been shown to affect levels of discrimination among judges (India)[17], voting behaviour and social capital in Peru,[18] political beliefs across 17 sub-saharan African countries,[19] and the propensity for violent crime in Switzerland.[20] Some studies define early life more generously and investigate experiences until adulthood proper (e.g. 0-30 years old, or up until obtaining a job) and find that experiences of religious violence at any point in this range can lead to religious discrimination over lending decisions by bank staff in later life.[21] Many studies investigate the impact of experiencing in war prior to adulthood with different periods of the younger years life found to be important. A study in Peru showed that the

[15] Arain et al., (2013); Blakemore (2012).

[16] Krosnick, Jon A, & Alwin, Duane F. 1989. Aging and Susceptibility to Attitude Change. Journal of personality and social psychology, 57(3), 416{425.

[17] Bharti, N. K., & Roy, S. (2023). The early origins of judicial stringency in bail decisions: Evidence from early childhood exposure to Hindu-Muslim riots in India. *Journal of Public Economics*, *221*, 104846. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2023.104846

[18] Malásquez, E. A., & Salgado, E. (2023). When the Identity of the Perpetrator Matters: The Heterogeneous Legacies of the Civil Conflict on Social Capital in Peru. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *71*(3), 1093–1148. https://doi.org/10.1086/717341

[19] Adhvaryu, A., & Fenske, J. (2023). Conflict and the Formation of Political Beliefs in Africa. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *71*(2), 403–442. https://doi.org/10.1086/715846

[20] Couttenier, M., Petrencu, V., Rohner, D., & Thoenig, M. (2019). The Violent Legacy of Conflict: Evidence on Asylum Seekers, Crime, and Public Policy in Switzerland. *The American Economic Review*, *109*(12), 4378–4425. https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20170263

[21] Fisman, R., Sarkar, A., Skrastins, J., & Vig, V. (2020).

experience of civil war in the first 3 years of life is a crucial determinant of poor labour market outcomes (low wages, unemployment), with women disproportionately negatively affected,[22] whereas in Uganda abduction to the military as an adolescent or young adult increased political participation in later life.[23] While less specific about the cohort of people affected, there are several studies in the Middle East illustrating that the experience of conflict has affected labour market outcomes in the Gaza Strip[24] and reduced school achievement.[25] Palestinian fatalities have also been associated with, albeit short term, increases in support for military factions.[26]

Through this lens, the 90s cohort can be seen as having had a unique experience with respect to conflict exposure and the diplomatic failures of the peace process. This cohort does not have experience of Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in an interconnected way either. More specifically, with regard to violence, much of their formative years of the 90s cohort (adolescence and young adulthood) occurred during the Second Intifada (2000-2005). This cohort also saw break down of peace talks, two deadly Gaza wars, the Lebanon war of 2006 in their younger years. The drop in support for peace among Israelis at the age of 18-20 witnessed for the 90s and 80s (see Figure 5a) birth-cohorts could be explained by their experience of military service in general, or otherwise their draft into the operation Cast Lead. In short, the 90s cohort, and to some extent the 80s cohort, of Israelis and Palestinians have had shared experiences of conflict throughout their young lives.[27] While we cannot claim causality, according to the previous literature these experiences would have been enough in principle to cause this cohort to have the persistently lower support, less belief in the peace process, and the unusual (negative) age-effects witnessed in our data.

[22] Galdo, J. (2013). The Long-Run Labor-Market Consequences of Civil War: Evidence from the Shining Path in Peru. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *61*(4), 789–823. https://doi.org/10.1086/670379

[23] Blattman, C. (2009).

[24] Di Maio, M., & Leone Sciabolazza, V. (2023). Conflict exposure and labour market outcomes: Evidence from longitudinal data for the Gaza Strip. *Labour Economics*, *85*, 102439. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2023.102439

[25] Brück, T., Di Maio, M., & Miaari, S. H. (2019). Learning The Hard Way: The Effect of Violent Conflict on Student Academic Achievement. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, *17*(5), 1502–1537. https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvy051

[26] Loewenthal, A., Miaari, S. H., & Abrahams, A. (2023). How civilian attitudes respond to the state's violence: Lessons from the Israel–Gaza conflict. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, *40*(4), 441–463. https://doi.org/10.1177/07388942221097325

[27] The 1990s cohort entered the survey in 2008.

Conclusion

Between 2000 and 2016 the conflict in the Middle East occurred alongside the fact that the support for peace among members of the public in Israel and Palestine was by far the majority view. 73% and 65% of the respective populations supported peace negotiations during this period. Beneath these figures lie complicated dynamics. While support or peace typically is higher among older people in the region, successively younger cohorts, in particular those born in the 90s, tend to have between 10 and 20% lower support for peace compared to adjacent cohorts at the same age. Further, belief that the peace process will lead to long-lasting peace was much lower for both Israelis and Palestinians, at around 30% from 2011. An extensive empirical literature shows that experience of violence and political unrest as a young person can affect the political opinions that they take with them into adulthood. Closer inspection of our data suggests that this could explain the persistently lower support among the younger cohorts of our sample. The 90s cohort has had a unique experience of violence, political unrest and the failure of negotiations in their younger years compared to adjacent cohorts.

These findings are important because the fear is that, whatever the cause, the persistently lower support for peace negotiations and the growing scepticism about their ultimate success could serve to slow or halt efforts to negotiate a lasting peace in the region. This seems particularly salient when public opinion has played such a meaningful role in guiding conflict resolution on other contexts.[28] While we do not claim causality, if these trends in political opinions stem from shared life experiences of violence in the younger years, it could be that the lower support and scepticism will have persisted way beyond 2016 potentially to the present day. Quasi-experimental methods on data beyond 2016 would be required to test claims of causality between the experience of violence and political beliefs. Yet from the perspective of 2016, our analysis suggests that the support for the peace process was still a shared and majoritarian opinion among the two populations, albeit with a declining trend. In the face of these challenges, the imperative remains clear: there is a need to embark on tangible and collective actions, engaging with younger cohorts, to reignite a concrete peace process.

[28] Irwin (1999, 2004)