

Long-term Change in Conflict Attitudes: A Dynamic Perspective¹

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Abstract

A large literature examines how public attitudes on conflict resolution react to the conflict's events. However, their varying temporal dynamics remain understudied. Addressing this question, we suggest that violence, a main focal point in the literature, typically affects attitudes immediately but briefly, consistent with short-term emotional responses to palpable threats. By contrast, we contend that non-violent events signaling the adversary's intentions can have a lagged but longer-lasting attitudinal influence, implying deeper belief-updating processes. We test these hypotheses using a dynamic analysis of two decades of monthly surveys from Israel (2001-2020). We find that the long-term trajectory of aggregate public opinion about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict corresponds not with violence levels but with non-violent events signaling Palestinian preferences, particularly failed negotiations and hawkish leadership selection by the latter. These findings illuminate the temporal dimension of public attitudes in protracted conflicts and stress the underdiscussed importance of non-violent signals for advancing their resolution.

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Introduction

How do public attitudes about conflict resolution react to the conflict's ongoing events? This question stands at the heart of discussions about public opinion in the face of political violence, terrorism, wars, and diplomacy. The public's reaction to and lingering memory of meaningful events play a key role in the long-term trajectory of conflicts and their prospects for a peaceful solution. As many countries face recurring acts of political violence and conflict, our understanding of how real-world events affect public attitudes carries important implications for domestic and international politics alike.

Past research has significantly advanced our understanding of popular reactions to different events in active conflicts, with particular emphasis on the influence of greater violence by an adversary. Nevertheless, these findings have focused primarily on immediate or static attitudinal responses, underscoring cross-sectional differences across individuals and contexts at frozen moments in time. Yet we know far less about the temporal dynamics of these relationships. Which conflictual events leave a deeper and longer mark on public opinion over time? Does their influence vary in duration and erosion rate? And what theoretical processes do they imply? These questions are essential to fully understand the bottom-up pressures driving violent conflicts over time.

In this paper, we suggest that public attitudes about conflict resolution vary in their temporal reaction to two types of conflict-related events. First, violent actions that pose a prompt and palpable threat should exert an immediate but fleeting influence on public opinion, reflecting sudden emotional reactions that wane as the danger subsides. Second, non-violent events that send salient signals about the adversary's intentions should have a lagged but longer-lasting attitudinal effect, implying slower but deeper belief updating based on new information and top-down cues. We therefore argue that the latter type of events, which receive less attention in the literature, have a greater and longer influence than violence in itself on public attitudes about conflict resolution.

We test these hypotheses on Jewish-Israeli public attitudes regarding the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the turn of the century. Using data from the Peace Index, a unique monthly time series comprising hundreds of surveys that span two decades (2001-2020), we estimate a general error-correction model and a structural breakpoint analysis to identify the dynamic influence of real-world violence and non-violent signals on aggregate attitudes. Like past research, we find that greater Palestinian violence immediately depresses aggregate ideological

support and practical hope for compromise among Jewish Israelis. However, we also discover that this influence is short-lived and does not leave a long-lasting mark on public opinion. By contrast, failed negotiation summits and hawkish leadership selection by the Palestinians, both non-violent political events that send negative signals about the latter's intentions, exert a deeper and longer influence on the long-term trajectory of Jewish-Israeli attitudes. Indeed, in the past two decades, the two largest structural changes in Jewish-Israeli support and hope for compromise followed the victory of Islamist movement Hamas in the 2006 Palestinian election and the Obama administration's failed attempts to restart negotiations in 2009. A close examination of these critical moments provides additional insight into their dynamics and the role of top-down cues in this process.

The paper makes several contributions to the larger debate about public opinion in violent settings. Specifically, our findings highlight the underexplored but meaningful role of non-violent signals about the out-group in shaping the long-term path of public attitudes. While we confirm past findings on the immediate effect of violence, we also show that they are incomplete without a broader dynamic perspective that considers other lagged and slower influences. In doing so, our analysis also demonstrates the value of fine-grained time-series data and models that probe their dynamic nature. Thus, by taking time seriously both theoretically and methodologically, researchers can better distinguish short- and long-term processes of attitudinal change in conflicts, outline the different types of real-world events that drive them, and formulate new research questions about their micro-behavioral foundations and comparative differences across regions, periods, and contexts.

Equally important, our analysis of two decades' worth of representative surveys goes beyond the laboratory and isolated moments and provides a deep reflection of the real-world events that contributed to the gridlock in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the turn of the century. As such, our findings offer important lessons about the types of factors and strategies that can advance or impede conflict resolution, particularly the potentially grave consequences of informational signals sent by international and local elites about each side's intentions and the conflict's future.

The paper proceeds as follows. We begin with a brief review of existing explanations for changes in public attitudes in conflictual settings and discuss their underexplored temporal dimension. We then suggest two dynamic logics that contrast immediate emotional reactions and slower belief-updating processes. After presenting the Israeli case study and data, the remainder

of the paper tests our expectations empirically and concludes the broader implications of our findings.

Violence, Information, and the Missing Dynamic Perspective

An extensive body of work has studied the types of real-world events that influence public attitudes in conflictual settings. Of these factors, violence has received the greatest scholarly attention in recent years. According to multiple studies, increased violence by an adversary group triggers negative emotions such as anger, threat, and stress (Canetti-Nisim et al. 2009; Halperin 2011; Huddy et al. 2005; Malhotra and Popp 2012; Maoz and McCauley 2005; Vasilopoulos et al. 2019) and increases ethnocentric and intolerant sentiments (Echebarria-Echabe and Fernández-Guede 2006; Kam and Kinder 2007; Peffley, Hutchison, and Shamir 2015). These reactions tend to amplify militant attitudes that support aggressive security policies (Brouard, Vasilopoulos, and Foucault 2018; Kupatadze and Zeitzoff 2019), hawkish and oppositionist politicians (Aytaç and Çarkoğlu 2019; Bali 2007; Berrebi and Klor 2006, 2008; Bonanno and Jost 2006; Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014; Jaeger et al. 2012; Kibris 2011), and reluctance to compromise with the out-group (Bayer, Klasen, and Adam 2007; Canetti et al. 2017, 2018; Hirsch-Hoefler et al. 2014).

In some cases, nevertheless, violence can have the opposite effect and increase popular support for peaceful agreements and moderate politicians (Arian, Shamir, and Ventura 1992; Gould and Klor 2010; Tellez 2019). Contrary to hawkish reactions, such conciliatory attitudes are more likely to grow when violent events activate feelings of anxiety, fear, and weariness and foster a greater desire to end the bloodshed (Beber, Roessler, and Scacco 2014; Hazlett 2019; Huddy et al. 2005).

While the influence of violence has been researched extensively, several behavioral studies also find that non-violent information about the adversary's goals and the conflict's future can change people's openness for new facts, perceptions of the out-group, and support for compromise (Cohen-Chen et al. 2014; Hall et al. 2018; Halperin et al. 2011; Leshem and Halperin 2020; Rosler, Cohen-Chen, and Halperin 2017). The influences, however, are not uniform. New information about the adversary and the conflict is accepted more easily when it reaffirms existing preconceptions, typically negative ones, rather than challenges them (Bar-Tal et al. 2009; Halperin and Bar-Tal 2011; Nyhan and Zeitzoff 2018; Sheaffer and Dvir-Gvirzman 2010). Moreover, information about the out-group's intentions can alter people's practical hopes about the prospects

of peace regardless of their support for compromise in principle (Leshem 2019; Leshem and Halperin 2020).

Most of the literature, however, shares a similar vagueness about the dynamic aspect of its findings. Many studies—particularly examinations of causal mechanisms in controlled or quasi-controlled environments—focus on attitudinal change in the immediate aftermath of specific events or stimuli. Others analyze correlations with attitudes at a longer but frozen point in time, be it days, weeks, months, or several years after the event took place. The selection of the lag between cause and effect in these works often lacks theoretical justification and reflects the circumstances of their data collection. Even when the data include multiple periods, most series tend to be short in scope, have relatively large gaps, and lack in-depth analyses of long-term temporal structures.² While understandable, this ambiguity leaves several important questions unanswered: how long does the influence of different event types endure in the public’s mind? At what rate do their effects erode? And to what extent do they alter the long-term trajectory of public opinion regarding the conflict?

Immediate Threats and Long-Term Belief Updating

When considering these questions, we distinguish between the temporal influences of two types of events. The first type poses an immediate and palpable threat to one’s personal and collective safety. As past research finds, such moments are more likely to instantly activate potent emotions and attitudinal reactions (Huddy et al. 2002; Landau et al. 2004), particularly following violence against one’s in-group (e.g., Berrebi and Klor 2008; Brouard, Vasilopoulos, and Foucault 2018; Fielding and Penny 2009). Accordingly, we expect that the response to such a direct and tangible threat, particularly violence, would depend on its presence: it should be strongest near the threatening event and wane as the peril subsides. As noted earlier, the literature has mixed expectations about the direction of this influence: most studies hypothesize that violence should deepen negative attitudes about compromise, while several others anticipate a possible positive change. Thus, we can establish two competing hypotheses about the temporal influence of violence levels on public attitudes regarding the conflict:

² For exceptions, see Fielding and Penny (2009) and Jaeger et al. (2012), albeit with notably shorter and sparser time series than analyzed here.

H1.a. Greater violence will dampen public support and hope for conflict resolution immediately but only for a short period.

H1.b. Greater violence will enhance public support and hope for conflict resolution immediately but only for a short period.

A caveat is in order: in extreme cases, violent events can create lasting traumas that sustain long after the danger passes. This can occur to individuals suffering prolonged post-traumatic stress disorder after personal exposure to violence (Bonanno and Jost 2006; Hirsch-Hoefler et al. 2014), yet their influence on national public opinion is typically minuscule. Nevertheless, outstanding large-scale atrocities, such as indiscriminate mass violence and forced population transfers, can form collective narratives of victimhood passed down through generations (Balcells 2012; Lupu and Peisakhin 2017; Rozenas, Schutte, and Zhukov 2017). Given the extremity of such cases, however, we expect that they would be quite rare.

The second type of events offer new information about the adversary's goals and the conflict's future without posing an immediate physical threat. While these events can take various idiosyncratic forms, such signals are particularly visible when they indicate the other side's preferences publicly. This can occur when the two sides negotiate and publicly reveal their demands and flexibility for compromise. Similar signals are also sent when the adversary publicly selects its leaders and the visions that they offer regarding the conflict's future.

Unlike immediate emotional reactions to violence, such informational signals require gradual cognitive and emotional processing based on elite cues, public narratives, and existing predispositions (Bar-Tal and Halperin 2011; Berinsky 2009; Zaller 1992). These processes, accordingly, resemble rational belief updating more than immediate visceral responses (Gordon and Arian 2001). Therefore, while they progress slower than the latter, they can become entrenched in public attitudes for longer periods. Furthermore, as noted earlier, new information tends to be accepted more easily when it reinforces negative prejudices about the adversary and the conflict. Thus, whereas the direction of such signals depends on whether they are positive or negative, they would be particularly strong when the information is framed negatively. We can therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

H2. Salient negative (positive) new information about the adversary's preferences will dampen (enhance) public support and hope for conflict resolution slower but longer than violence.

In what follows, we examine these hypotheses empirically using a dynamic analysis of hundreds of monthly public opinion surveys conducted in Israel over two decades. The data's high frequency and longevity allow us to analyze how aggregate attitudes on the conflict react to various violence levels and informational events, how quickly they shift, and how long the reaction endures. Before we elaborate on our methodological approach, however, we first discuss our case study and data.

The Israeli Case

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has long been a central case study in the research of conflicts and political behavior. The conflict has been a defining and salient issue in Israeli society, partisan politics, and voter behavior (Arian and Shamir 2008; Shamir and Arian 1999). Nevertheless, despite its enduring presence, the conflict's everyday experience has been quite dynamic. In the past few decades, the Israeli public faced varying degrees of violence, including two large-scale violent campaigns (*Intifadas*) in the 1980s and early 2000s, ebbs and flows of small-scale terrorist attacks and rocket shelling, and prolonged quiet periods.³ The conflict has also provided multiple opportunities to assess the other side's intentions. The past decades included multiple rounds of bilateral negotiations for a peace agreement, some prolonged with meaningful advancements, particularly in the 1990s and briefly in the mid-2000s, and others shorter and futile and ending with a mutual blame game. Both parties also underwent political and leadership changes over the years, signaling varying popular support for hawkish or moderate visions of the conflict.

These temporal variations in violence and non-violent events deem Israel a particularly fitting case to examine their dynamic influences on attitudes over time. They also mark the boundaries of our analysis, a point that we discuss further in the paper's conclusion. In particular, the conflict's rich temporal dynamics stem from its protracted nature. As such, our broader inferences should be considered carefully, particularly where hostilities are experienced as a single large-scale shock with long-term traumatic effects (e.g., significant terror attacks such as 9/11 or

³ The conflict infamously inflicts violence on both sides, particularly asymmetrically against the Palestinians. Due to the scope of our data, we only discuss the one-sided experience of Israelis.

mass atrocities). Nevertheless, as Peffley, Hutchison, and Shamir (2015, 819) observe, Israel's experience with violence is "distinctive but not unique" and is comparable with dozens of other countries, including multiple democracies. Indeed, as more countries endure recurrent conflict and violent acts, from large-scale bombings to small-scale knifing or vehicle ramming, so does the Israeli experience become more relevant and generalizable.

Public Attitudes about the Conflict: The Peace Index Data

Our primary outcome of interest is Israeli public attitudes on the conflict over time. To examine these attitudes, we pooled together multiple public opinion surveys from the Peace Index, a survey project established in the 1990s at Tel Aviv University and later co-managed with the Israel Democracy Institute. Since its establishment, the Peace Index has regularly conducted monthly representative surveys with a small set of recurring questions about the peace process alongside interchanging batteries on each month's events. These data, therefore, offer a unique opportunity to examine national attitudes on the conflict using identical questions in close and regular intervals over two full decades.

We examine two dependent variables based on a pair of questions that have been asked regularly starting July 2001. The first dependent variable gauges *ideological support for negotiations in principle* based on the following question: "What is your position on conducting peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority?" The second dependent variable measures the level of *pragmatic hope that a peace agreement will be achieved in practice* with the following question: "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?" Both questions are answered using a four-point scale ranging from "Strongly in favor/believe" to "strongly opposed"/"do not believe at all". We consider both dimensions separately since they have been shown to vary at times despite a strong correlation (Hermann and Yaar 2019; Leshem and Halperin 2020).

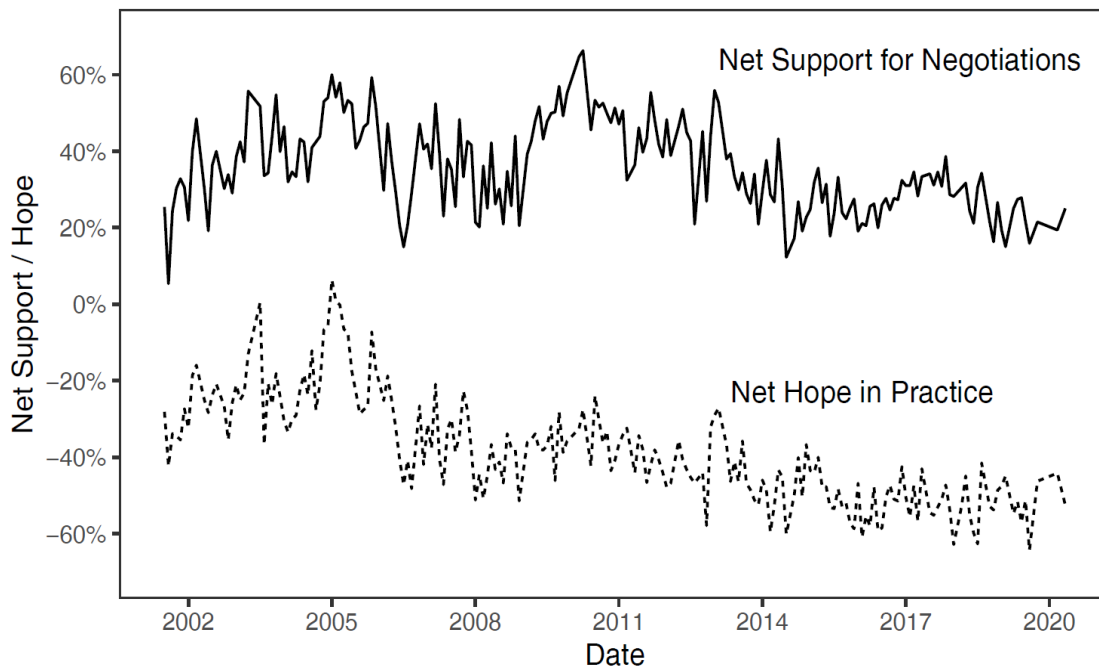
While each monthly survey uses a new sample of respondents, their representative design produces a reliable time series of aggregate public attitudes. Therefore, our two dependent variables measure the monthly aggregate net support for each statement, i.e., the total share of negative answers to each question subtracted from the share of positive answers every month. Because Arab citizens are surveyed inconsistently throughout the series, we aggregate only

answers from Israel's dominant Jewish majority. All in all, both variables comprise 227 months from July 2001 to May 2020.

Of these months, twenty-five have missing observations.⁴ In Section 3 in the supplementary material, we show that the missing observations are spaced far apart, predominantly in single gaps, and are uncorrelated with the conflict's violence and non-violent events as measured by our variables. Hence, together with the strong serial autocorrelation in both series, we feel safe to impute the missing observations with a simple linear interpolation. Since the missing values are only in the dependent variables, multiple imputation is an inappropriate alternative (von Hippel 2007; Little 1992). As robustness tests, discussed in the supplementary material, we reestimated our error-correction model using several other interpolation methods and while omitting the largest consecutive gap and found similar results.

Figure 1 plots both time series. The data show that aggregate net support for negotiations in principle has remained positive throughout the past twenty years notwithstanding occasional ebbs and flows. Despite some correlated movements with the former, the aggregate net hope for peace in practice is notably lower and has been consistently negative and in decline. Our analysis attempts to shed new light on the dynamic nature of these trends with two complementary methods.

Figure 1. *Net Support for Negotiations and Net Hope about Peace in Practice, July 2001-May 2020.*



⁴ Sixteen months had no surveys at all and nine more surveys skipped the two relevant questions.

First, we estimate a general error-correction model with prespecified independent variables to find average patterns across the entire sample period. Second, we employ a structural breakpoint analysis to inductively identify critical junctures of long-term attitudinal change and then qualitatively probe related real-world events and implied mechanisms. Together, the two methods establish a robust dual test for our hypotheses. We discuss each set of findings in turn.

Average Patterns: General Error-Correction Model

Independent Variables

We begin with a general error-correction model that estimates attitudinal changes using several independent variables indicating monthly violence levels and non-violent signals. We use two independent variables to gauge the monthly levels of violence experienced by Israelis as part of the conflict. The first counts the *monthly number of Israeli casualties* due to Palestinian actions.⁵ Given the country's mandatory military service and high sensitivity for combat deaths (Levy 2012), we count both civilian and security forces fatalities. The second variable measures the *monthly number of rockets* shot at Israel from the Gaza strip.⁶ The Palestinian use of rockets started in the early-2000s and quickly increased in volume and range, now reaching the most populous areas in central Israel. Whereas these rockets are less deadly than other forms of violence, they are aimed indiscriminately at civilians and have noticeable psychological, social, and political effects (Besser and Neria 2009; Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014; Greene et al. 2018; Zeitzoff 2014). Since casualties and rockets have unevenly high peaks and presumably a decreasing marginal influence, we calculate the natural logarithm of both.⁷

Next, we construct two variables to measure non-violent events with salient signals about the adversary's preferences regarding the conflict. Most Israelis do not come in regular contact with the Palestinians and rely primarily on public cues.⁸ Hence, we focus on two types of events.

⁵ The data are collected by B'Tselem (<https://www.btselem.org/statistics>).

⁶ Rocket data are coded based on monthly reports issued by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (<https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/>).

⁷ To deal with zeros, we take the natural log of each month's counts plus one. Since high peaks in casualties and rockets typically indicate mutual violence and direct combat, e.g., military operations in Gaza, we do not model such operations separately.

⁸ Some may suggest the media as an influential source for signals. Yet, for our purposes, the media operates as a mediating channel that frames events rather than as an initiator. Moreover, past research has shown that media coverage in Israel displays a stable tendency for negative framing of the conflict's events (Sheafer and Dvir-Gvirsman 2010; Wolfsfeld 2004). Hence, we leave questions about media framing effects outside the scope of our analysis and treat it as a constant, integral aspect of the events that we model.

The first variable is a dummy indicating months with *formal Israeli-Palestinian negotiation meetings*. Negotiation summits and their conclusion send visible and salient signals about each side's demands and willingness to compromise. Accordingly, we only include summits that were publically known in real time. Our data include five public negotiation meetings between 2001 and 2020, reflecting the conflict's diplomatic gridlock since the turn of the century. Nevertheless, precisely for their rarity and futility, these meetings sent similar negative signals and drew significant public attention and high-profile mediation efforts by international actors.

The second variable gauges *hawkish leadership selection in the Palestinian Authority* using a categorical score indicating months with leadership changes signaling a militant (1) or moderate (-1) disposition. The popular choice of hawkish or moderate leaders sends a visible signal about greater public support for their visions on the conflict. Our sample period includes four such moments, one positive and three negative. In January 2005, a positive signal was sent when the relatively moderate Mahmoud Abbas was elected president after Yassir Arafat's death.⁹ The three negative events signaled popular support and legitimization of Hamas, a militant Islamist movement that denies Israel's right to exist and has continuously engaged in terrorist activities: in March 2006, the movement formed the Palestinian government for the first time after winning a majority of seats in the legislative election; in March 2007, it headed a unity government with the more moderate Fatah party; and in July 2007, after the unity agreement collapsed, it forcibly took control over the Gaza strip and formed a separate government parallel to Fatah's West Bank administration.

We also include three control variables. First, we calculate *the share of Israeli cabinet ministers from right-wing parties* to control for similar dampening signals about the preferences of fellow Israelis. Second, we use the *real average monthly wage of Israeli hired workers* (at constant 2011 prices) to control for the state of the economy, which may influence the public mood regardless of the conflict.¹⁰ Third, we include a *monthly time trend* to account for a possible long-

⁹ Arafat was perceived by most Jewish Israelis as a violent extremist: in the October 2004 Peace Index survey, weeks before Arafat's death, 74.9% of Jewish respondents estimated that he controlled street-level Palestinian violence and 78.7% regarded him as a terrorist rather than a legitimate statesman. By contrast, in January 2005, after Abbas was elected, 57.3% of Jewish respondents noted that the latter is making sincere efforts to stop Palestinian violence while only 31.7% disagreed.

¹⁰ Other monthly economic indices, such as consumer satisfaction surveys, the monthly unemployment rate, or the Bank of Israel's Composite State-of-the-Economy Index are either unavailable for the sample's entire duration or exhibit a unit root with a high level of integration that could bias our analysis. The average wage, nevertheless, has strong bivariate correlations (0.7 to 0.85) with these three alternative indices.

term monotonic decline in support or hope for peace irrespective of specific events. The descriptive plots of all variables are shown in Section 1 in the supplementary material.

Model Setup

To examine the dynamic relationship between the two attitudinal variables and the independent variables, we estimate a general error-correction model (GECM) using an OLS regression (De Boef and Keele 2008; Davidson et al. 1978). The GECM regresses changes in the independent variable on its own lagged value and on both the first differences and the lagged values of the independent variables. Formally, the GECM is specified as follows:

$$\Delta y_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 y_{t-1} + \beta'_0 \Delta X_t + \beta'_1 X_{t-1} + \epsilon_t$$

where Δy_t is the change in the dependent variable, α_1 estimates the influence of its lagged levels one period earlier (also known as the error correction term), β'_0 estimate the immediate effects of a one-unit change in a vector of independent variables X_t , and β'_1 estimate the lagged effect of the same vector of variables one period later. The inclusion of both first differences and lagged values separates the immediate and later effects of each independent variable on the outcome. Moreover, the GECM provides information about the long-term relationships between the independent and dependent variables using long-run multipliers (LRMs). Calculated as $LRM_x = -\frac{\beta_1}{\alpha_1}$, these scores estimate the cumulative effect of a one-time change in each independent variable across multiple future periods.

To avoid bias, the GECM requires that all variables have the same order of integration (Grant and Lebo 2016; Keele, Linn, and Webb 2016). A series of unit root tests, detailed in Section 2 in the supplementary material, indicates that all our variables but one are stationary. The exception is the share of Israeli right-wing cabinet seats, which is integrated of order one due to long static periods between changes. We therefore include only its first difference, i.e., the influence of relative changes in the cabinet's makeup rather than absolute monthly levels.

To select the proper number of lags in the GECM, we used a general-to-specific approach by iterating our models with different combinations of lag lengths. We then chose the number of lags that optimized model fit based on their Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) and coefficient t-tests scores. The procedure, detailed in Section 4 in the supplementary material, favored a single monthly lag for logged rockets, logged casualties, and average wage and two monthly lags for

negotiation meetings and hawkish leadership changes by the Palestinians, foreshadowing a temporally intricate effect, as we shall see.¹¹

Finally, we ran a series of Lagrange Multiplier tests for serial autocorrelation in our models. In both cases, we find that adding the first difference of the lagged dependent variable (Δy_{t-1}) fully eliminates autocorrelation.

GECM Findings

Table 1 presents the GECM estimations. For ease of interpretation, both net attitudes are measured on a scale of 1-100 points rather than percentages. The first-difference coefficients indicate that greater violence—increases in the logged number of rockets shot from Gaza or the logged number of Israeli casualties by Palestinian actions—lead to an instant and statistically significant decline in both net support for negotiations and net hope for peace in practice. All else equal, an increase of one standard deviation in the logged number of rockets is estimated to immediately lower the aggregate net support for negotiations by 1.57 points and net hope in their prospects by 1.15 points on average. Similarly, a one-standard-deviation increase in the logged number of casualties is estimated to immediately decrease net support for negotiations by an average of 1.92 points and net hope for peace by 1.72 points. These results, therefore, corroborate the expectation that violence immediately dampens aggregate public attitudes regarding resolution (Hypothesis H1.a).

Nevertheless, we are interested in placing these influences in a broader dynamic context. To do so, we calculate each explanatory variable's LRM, which estimate their overall cumulative effect in all future periods, presented in the bottom panel in Table 1. To estimate the LRMs' confidence levels, we employ the bounds test proposed recently by Webb, Linn, and Lebo (2020). Recognizing the imperfections of current unit-root tests, Webb, Linn, and Lebo use simulations to propose significance bounds for LRMs regardless of the variables' real order of integration. The test has three possible outcomes: no long-term relationship when the t-statistic falls under the lower bound, a statistically significant long-term relationship when the t-statistic rises above the upper bound, and a statistically inconclusive long-term relationship when the t-statistic is in between. Most LRMs in our model fall in the middle category, indicating that their full magnitude is plausible but somewhat uncertain. The long-run effect of rockets, however, is strictly insignificant.

¹¹ Algebraically, once both the first and second lag of an independent variable are included in the GECM, its first difference (ΔX_t) is replaced with its second difference ($\Delta^2 X_t$).

Table 1. Aggregate Attitudinal Changes: General Error-Correction Models

	(1)		(2)	
	Δ Net Support for Negotiations in Principle		Δ Net Hope for Peace in Practice	
	β	S.E.	β	S.E.
Net Support $_{t-1}$	-0.351***	(0.056)		
Δ Net Support $_{t-1}$	-0.143*	(0.061)		
Net Hope $_{t-1}$			-0.323***	(0.063)
Δ Net Hope $_{t-1}$			-0.148*	(0.065)
Δ Log Rockets	-0.890**	(0.316)	-0.654*	(0.302)
Log Rockets $_{t-1}$	-0.221	(0.333)	-0.185	(0.318)
Δ Log Casualties	-1.716**	(0.621)	-1.536*	(0.592)
Log Casualties $_{t-1}$	-2.184**	(0.713)	-0.935	(0.643)
Δ^2 Negotiations $_{t-1}$	-0.297	(3.341)	-0.344	(3.264)
Negotiations $_{t-1}$	-3.504	(7.658)	-0.819	(7.555)
Negotiations $_{t-2}$	-7.637 [†]	(4.588)	-10.450*	(4.385)
Δ^2 Hawkish Leadership $_{t-1}$	4.169	(3.673)	1.625	(3.466)
Hawkish Leadership $_{t-1}$	4.589	(8.314)	-1.288	(7.900)
Hawkish Leadership $_{t-2}$	-17.346***	(5.097)	-10.286*	(4.843)
Δ Right Israeli Cabinet	0.077	(0.075)	0.060	(0.072)
Δ Average Wage	-0.002	(0.001)	0.001	(0.001)
Average Wages $_{t-1}$	-0.003 [†]	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)
Trend	-0.043**	(0.016)	-0.073***	(0.019)
Constant	59.668***	(11.392)	26.473**	(8.526)
<i>Long-Run Multipliers (LRM)</i>				
Log Rockets	-0.629	(0.949)	-0.572	(0.98)
Log Casualties	-6.226 [§]	(1.944)	-2.898 [§]	(2.009)
Negotiations	-31.756 [§]	(18.759)	-34.912 [§]	(22.047)
Extreme Lead	-36.361 [§]	(19.078)	-35.855 [§]	(19.913)
<i>N</i>	225		225	
<i>R</i> ²	0.376		0.362	
<i>AIC</i>	1530.640		1508.464	
<i>BIC</i>	1588.714		1566.538	

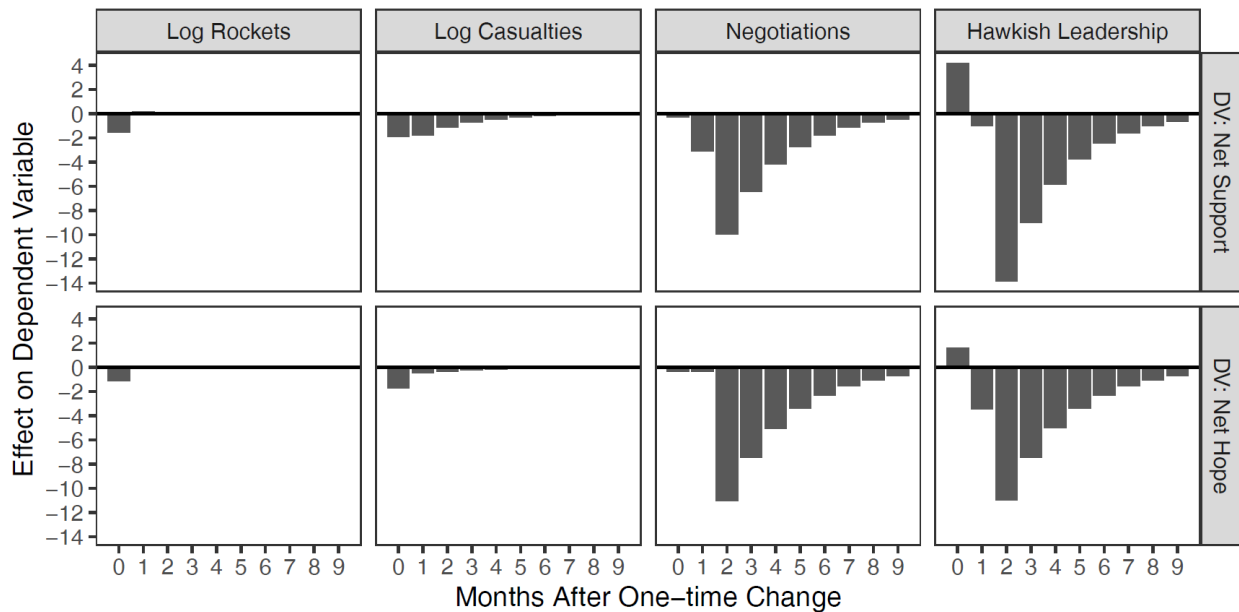
Note: Standard errors in parentheses, [†] $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. The dependent variables use a scale of 1-100 points. [§] Agnostic statistical significance (middle category) of long-term relationship at the 95% level using the bounds test from Webb, Linn, and Lebo (2020) assuming 5 variables and 150 observations.

To better visualize the long-term effect of each independent variable, we calculate each LRM's lag distribution assuming a one-time increase by one standard deviation in each relevant

variable. In the case of negotiations and hawkish leadership change, where the outcomes are binary or categorical, we assume a switch from 0 to 1. Figure 2 plots the estimated average temporal distribution of the LRMs over nine months.

The findings tell a temporally intricate story. In both models, the negative influence of rocket shelling erodes immediately and disappears by the following month.¹² The dynamic effect of casualties follows a similar pattern, albeit depending on the type of attitude. Like rocket shelling, a one-standard-deviation increase in the logged number of casualties has a sudden but fleeting influence on the aggregate hope for peace, eroding after a single month. At the same time, the aggregate willingness to negotiate with the Palestinians is slightly less forgiving. A one-standard-deviation shock in logged casualties creates an immediate negative decline of 1.92 points but its cumulative effect reaches 6.23 points on average over the next four to five months.¹³ While the full extent of this multiplier has an indeterminate statistical significance, the GECM indicates a

Figure 2. *Estimated Average Lag Distribution after a One-Standard-Deviation Increase in Each Independent Variable. Dummy and Categorical Variables Increase from 0 to 1.*



¹² Getmansky and Zeitzoff (2014) argue that the mere threat of Palestinian rockets, whose range has increased over the sample period, pushed the Israeli electorate rightward in the ballot boxes. We perform two tests to rule out a similar influence on public attitudes. First, we reestimated our models while interacting the logged rocket counts—only its first difference, only its first lag, and then both simultaneously—with a dummy variable indicating the period after the first rocket was shot at the Tel Aviv metropolitan area (November 2012). Second, to gauge a more gradual and steady growth in threat over time, we also interacted the logged rockets variables with a simple year count. All interaction terms produced null results.

¹³ Naturally, these estimations depend on the assumed shock size. Nevertheless, while more extreme changes in the number of casualties increase the cumulative effect size, their erosion pattern remains similar.

significant first-lag influence at a minimum. More casualties, therefore, do not make the Jewish-Israeli public more pessimistic about the prospects of peace beyond a single month (like rocket shelling) but they do have a slightly larger and longer dampening influence on the willingness to negotiate with the Palestinians. The broader implication, nevertheless, still supports Hypothesis H1.a: greater violence levels undermine support and hope for compromise immediately, but their influence erodes relatively quickly.

By contrast, we see the opposite dynamic with non-violent signals. Neither negotiation meetings nor hawkish leadership changes trigger a notable sudden reaction in public opinion, but both have a longer demoralizing influence that peaks two months after the events and erodes slowly thereafter. On average, negotiation meetings barely change aggregate support and hopes for an agreement immediately and further lowers them by -3.1 and -0.36 points respectively a month later, all indistinguishable from zero at the 95% level. However, as the failure becomes evident and is properly processed, both aggregate support and hope for peace plummet starting two months after the summit, an influence that sometimes lasts even nine months later.

Hawkish signals about the Palestinians' leadership selection exhibit a similar pattern. Curiously, we find a positive immediate effect, possibly reflecting an initial hope for responsible moderation once extremist factions face the pressures of leadership. Nevertheless, this effect is statistically insignificant and turns negative one month later. While the bounds tests remain statistically agnostic about the full extent of these long-run cumulative effects, the GECM indicates that the largest dip, which takes place at $t+2$, is statistically significant. These results, therefore, support Hypothesis H2, indicating a lagged but prolonged influence of both types of informational signals on aggregate public attitudes about the conflict's resolution.

Influential Events: Structural Breakpoint Analysis

The GECM estimation is instructive but has several limitations. First, it models average attitudinal changes based on events that can be coded systematically over time, yet such events can take idiosyncratic forms that are hard to operationalize *a priori*. This is particularly true for singular moments such as deeply traumatic violent acts or unique non-violent events that reshape earlier conceptions. Second, the statistical indecisiveness of the LRM bounds-test muddies our full confidence in the long-term influence of non-violent signals. Finally, the average patterns provide

little information about the actual political dynamics accompanying critical moments of long-term attitudinal change.

To address these issues, we complement our earlier findings with an inductive analysis of structural breakpoints in our two attitudinal variables. Rather than prespecified independent variables, structural breakpoint analyses seek moments of significant change in the underlying structure of the outcome data. Once such points are identified, we can qualitatively examine real-world events that took place around these times and their fit with different theoretical explanations (Caporale and Grier 2005; Wawro and Katznelson 2014). In our case, we expect that long-term breaks in the two aggregate attitudes will align with salient non-violent events signaling the Palestinians' intentions and the conflict's future rather than with notably violent moments.

We estimate structural breakpoints in our data using Bai and Perron's method (1998, 2003), which allows for multiple breaks in each series. A Zivot-Andrews unit-root test confirms the required assumption that both attitudinal series are breakpoint stationary. We use a standard trimming parameter value of 0.15 and determine the number and position of the estimated breakpoints with a sequential $l+1$ breaks versus l test.¹⁴ Since both series show signs of trend stationarity, we include a temporal trend term in the estimation.

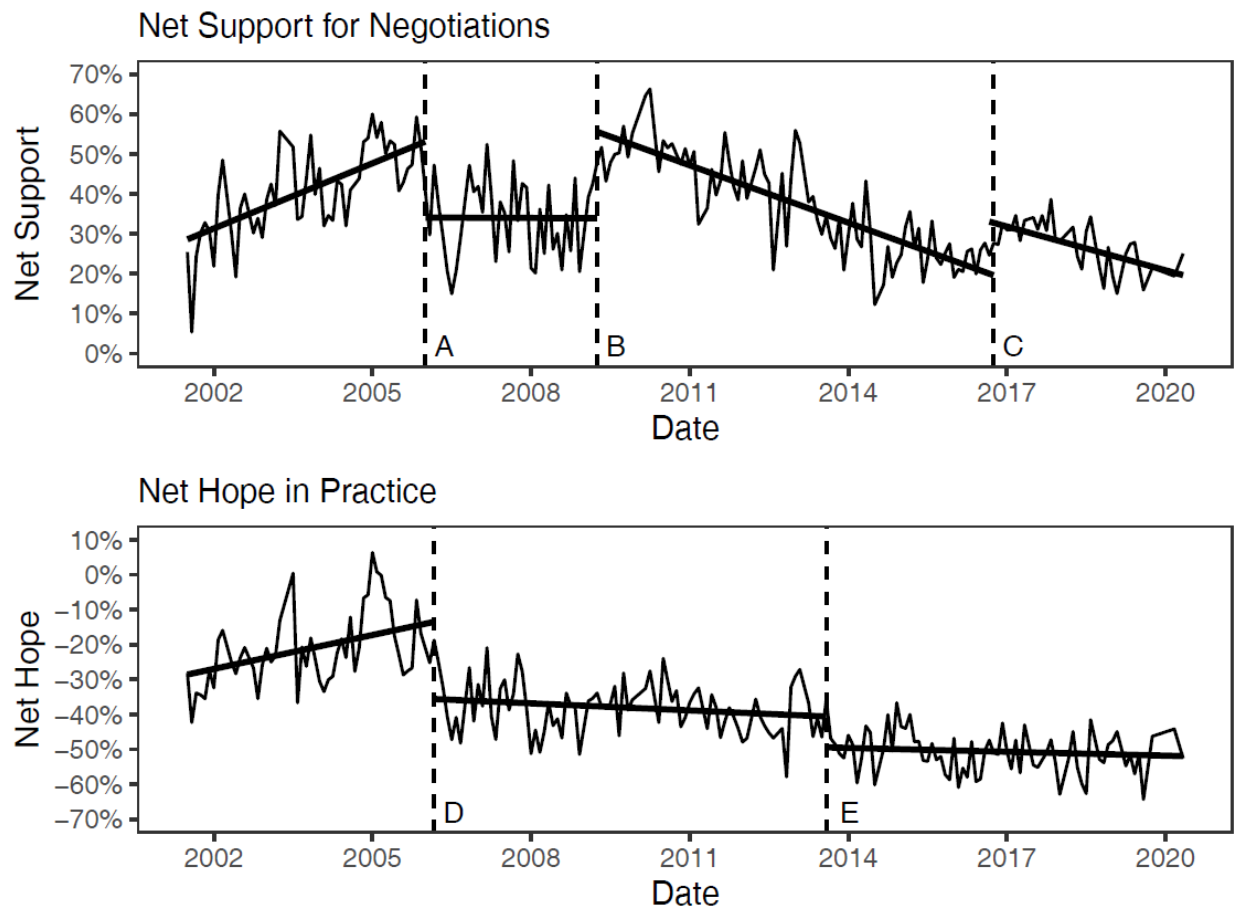
Figure 3 plots the estimated breakpoints in aggregate support and hope for compromise. In each series, the dashed vertical lines mark the timing of identified breakpoints while the fitted lines display the average trend in each subperiod. The aggregate net support for negotiations in principle, presented in the top panel, has three estimated breakpoints: January 2006 (A), April 2009 (B), and October 2016 (C). The aggregate net hope for peace in practice, plotted in the bottom panel, has two estimated breakpoints: April 2006 (D) and September 2013 (E).

The key characteristics of these breakpoints are summarized in Table 2. The first two columns indicate whether each structural breakpoint includes changes in absolute levels and/or long-term trend and their direction.¹⁵ These shifts show both the similarities and differences between the two attitudes. Both ideological support for negotiations and hope about their prospects grew similarly during the early 2000s and experienced a parallel sharp drop in early 2006 (points A and D). In both cases, this break shifted the long-term trajectory downward for the next few

¹⁴ As a robustness check, the same breakpoints are also identified with Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) and Liu-Wu-Zidek (LWZ) tests.

¹⁵ The direction and significance of each change are corroborated econometrically by a series of interrupted time-series models, detailed in Section 5.1 in the supplementary material.

Figure 3. *Structural Breakpoints in Aggregate Net Support for Negotiations (Top Panel) and net Hope for Peace in Practice (Bottom Panel) Using Bai-Perron Models*



years. At this point, however, the two series diverge. The aggregate net support for negotiations temporarily bounced back in early 2009 (point B) before gradually eroding again. Practical hope for peace, by contrast, never meaningfully rebounded after 2006. The last breakpoints in both series—September 2013 (point E) and October 2016 (point C)—are smaller and exhibit more minor changes in levels without shifting the long-term trend.

Which explains these breaks? The third column in Table 2 examines rocket and casualty levels at each point compared to the sample averages.¹⁶ Supporting our earlier findings, none of the breaks occurred in particularly violent moments nor did they take place during notable military operations. By contrast, as the fourth column shows, all moments can be linked with proximate non-violent events that sent salient signals about the other side’s preferences and the prospects of

¹⁶ See Section 5.2 in the supplementary material for a detailed comparison of the number of rockets and casualties at each breakpoint and their sample, decade, and annual averages.

Table 2. Structural Breakpoints: Violence Levels and Non-Violent Events

	<i>Direction of Change</i>		<i>Violence Levels</i>	<i>Non-Violent Events</i>
	<i>In Levels</i>	<i>In Trend</i>		
<i>Net Support</i>				
<i>A. Jan. 2006</i>	-	-	Low	Hamas wins election
<i>B. Apr. 2009</i>	+	-	Low	Diplomatic momentum and failure
<i>C. Oct. 2016</i>	+	No Change	Low	Trump wins election
<i>Net Hope</i>				
<i>D. Apr. 2006</i>	-	-	Average	Hamas forms government
<i>E. Sep. 2013</i>	-	No Change	Low	Diplomatic failure

Note: The direction of change in levels and trends is supported by a series of interrupted time-series models (see Section 5.1 in the supplementary material). Violence levels are considered vis-à-vis the sample and annual averages (see Section 5.2 in the supplementary material).

a resolution. Moreover, as we expect, most include failed negotiations or leadership selection. To gain better insight into the influence of these events, we turn to examine each moment, with particular attention to the first three breakpoints that exhibit the largest structural changes in both attitudinal levels and trends.

Early 2006: Hamas’s Electoral Victory

The first notable breakpoint in both net support and net hope occurred in January-April 2006 (points A and D). The early months of 2006 featured two political developments: the Palestinian general legislative elections and government formation in January and April and the Israeli general elections in March. Of the two, the Israeli election seems less meaningful. The elections were won handily by the incumbent party Kadima based on its past agenda of unilateral withdrawals. The Peace Index survey conducted after the election verifies that most respondents supported the winning coalition and split along expected partisan and ideological lines. The election, therefore, largely reinforced the political status quo.

The Palestinian election, by contrast, seems like a critical moment of change. The Palestinian Legislative Council election was held for the first time in a decade after a long single-party reign by the Fatah party with which Israel previously negotiated. Yet, defying earlier expectations, most seats were surprisingly won by Hamas. In reality, Hamas’s success reflected domestic frustration with the Fatah administration, in-fighting among their opponents, and advantageous electoral rules rather than popular support for its hawkish agenda (Shikaki and Shamir 2010). However, to Israeli eyes, the victory signaled a Palestinian preference for violent

extremism. According to the Peace Index survey from January 2006, 60% of Jewish respondents stated that Hamas's victory posed an existential threat to Israel and 74% predicted little to no chance that Hamas will eventually recognize Israel's right to exist. Moreover, 55% of Jewish respondents opposed direct negotiations with a Hamas-led government and 87% estimated that there is little to no chance of reaching a peace agreement with it.

The negative signal from Hamas's victory intensified in the next few months as more negative cues accumulated, fitting the lagged structural break in aggregate hope in April 2006. Following the election, the Middle East Quartet—the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, and Russia—demanded publicly that any Hamas-led government recognize Israel, accept previous bilateral agreements, and commit to nonviolence. Despite these pressures, Hamas blatantly rejected these conditions, triggering severe international, American, and Israeli economic sanctions once the new government was sworn in. The Israeli public seemed to take notice: the Peace Index survey conducted in late March 2006, two months after the election, saw an increase in the share of Jewish respondents doubting that Hamas will moderate its violent behavior (79% compared to 50% in January) and a slightly higher objection to direct negotiations with the movement (57% compared to 54% in January). Hence, Hamas's victory, its subsequent refusal to disavow violence and recognize Israel, and an aggressive international and Israeli delegitimization campaign in the following months sent a strong signal to the Israeli public that the Palestinians prefer violent extremism to compromise. The result, it seems, was a noticeable years-long drop in aggregate Jewish-Israeli support and hope for compromise.

Early 2009: American-led Diplomatic Momentum and Subsequent Failure

Our structural breakpoint analysis finds that net support for negotiations, but not practical hopes for peace, bounced back around April 2009 (point B) before declining again for the next few years. The main development in early 2009 signaled a new momentum in the peace process given political changes in the US and Israel. In January 2009, President Obama took office with high expectations for a new diplomatic approach after the hawkish Bush years. Obama quickly appointed George Mitchell, known for his involvement in Northern Ireland's Good Friday Agreement, as his Special Envoy for restarting Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Meanwhile, in Israel, a new government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu was sworn into office in March and was immediately pressured on this issue by the US. In March and April 2009, Israel hosted formal

visits by Mitchell and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, during which she publicly expressed her support for a two-state solution and objection to Israel's settlement policy. Additionally, an Obama-Netanyahu meeting was set for May with this agenda in mind. According to the Peace Index survey conducted in March 2009, 62% of Jewish respondents estimated that the Israeli government would maintain a good relationship with the US regarding peace negotiations and would face severe pressure from Obama if not. Hence, the flurry of preparations in the spring of 2009 sent a visible signal that the US administration is determined to revive the peace process and that agreeing to negotiate is in Israel's strategic interest. That there was not a similar rise in practical hope for peace may indicate that many waited for substantial signs that the Palestinians are committed as well.

Nevertheless, subsequent developments over the following months help explain the lagged but renewed decline in support for negotiations. The momentum continued during the summer, with Obama's dovish Cairo Speech and Netanyahu's public acceptance of the two-state solution in his Bar-Ilan University address. Furthermore, in November 2009, the Israeli government announced a 10-month settlement construction freeze following intense American pressure. By its conclusion, in September 2010, Israeli and Palestinian representatives were set to meet for direct peace talks in Washington D.C. and Sharm El Sheikh.

However, the first cracks appeared early and expanded consistently. Despite Netanyahu's endorsement of the two-state solution, he developed a visibly strained relationship with Obama and repeatedly demanded strict preconditions for an agreement, particularly a formal Palestinian recognition in Israel as the State of the Jews. During the September 2010 talks, Israel's leadership continued to raise this demand publicly and refused to extend the settlement freeze without it. The Israeli public paid attention to this signal: in the Peace Index survey from October 2010, 75% of Jewish respondents justified Netanyahu's demand for Palestinian recognition and 81% agreed that the Palestinians did not accept Israel's existence and would destroy it if they could. The anticipated negotiations quickly imploded, leading the frustrated US administration to shift focus to other foreign policy areas. Both the initial momentum in early 2009 and its subsequent failure are mirrored well in the rise and fall of public support for negotiations, corroborating our earlier findings of the lagged but long-term influence of failed diplomacy.¹⁷

¹⁷ Of these intricate political dynamics, our GECM analysis includes the 2010 summit as the relevant data point for negotiations. Hence, this chronology fits the negative pattern found in our GECM estimation.

September 2013: More Futile Negotiations

The last two breakpoints exhibit smaller but noticeable breaks in attitudinal levels without changing their previous temporal trends. Nevertheless, they too align with discernable non-violent signals about the conflict's future. The first (point E) shows a decline in practical hope for peace in September 2013, two months after another round of direct negotiations initiated by the new US Secretary of State, John Kerry. Unlike the positive momentum in 2009, however, this round of negotiations never gained steam and ended quickly with a whimper. While the Jewish-Israeli public was skeptical from the start, it nevertheless grew more doubtful after the meetings. In the Peace Index survey from June 2013, before the negotiations took place, 71.3% estimated that Kerry's initiative has low or very low success odds. After the meetings, this share grew to 79.4% in July and 81.2% in September. Hence, even a low-key failure to restart negotiations, without an initial momentum, deepened skepticism and led to an additional structural decline in aggregate hope for peace. Echoing our GECM findings, this change became more pronounced a month or two after the direct meetings, implying gradual processing of the failure.

October 2016: Trump's Presidential Victory

The last structural breakpoint (point C) found rising support for negotiations after October 2016. The most notable event near this moment was Donald Trump's electoral victory in early November.¹⁸ In the Peace Index survey conducted right after the presidential election, 48.5% of Jewish Israelis estimated that Trump favors Israel over the Palestinians and 61.8% assumed that he would not oppose and even actively support its settlement construction. By contrast, only 22.2% said that Obama was friendly to Israel throughout his term. These attitudes fit comparative surveys showing that Israel was one of the only countries in which Trump was seen favorably during his term (e.g., Wike et al. 2020). Hence, Trump's victory seemed to signal greater US support for Israeli demands and a stronger bargaining position at the expense of the Palestinians. This dynamic helps explain the structural bounce in willingness to negotiate even as the practical hope for peace remained low. While this signal is not directly about Palestinian intentions, it, too, illustrates the

¹⁸ Although the model identifies October as the clearest breakpoint, Figure 3 verifies that the bounce covered the following few months before assuming its previous trend. Moreover, October did not include other notable events.

importance of changes in the conflict's ideological power-balance following cues from international actors.

Conclusion

Public opinion is a key aspect of violent conflicts. The levels of public support and hope for a resolution establish bottom-up pressures that can escalate or moderate the conflict's future path. Accordingly, a large and growing literature has explored the various factors that influence public attitudes in conflicts, with particular attention to violent events. Nevertheless, past findings have mostly explored short-term or static attitudinal differences across individuals and contexts, providing incomplete accounts of their full dynamic implications.

Using a dynamic analysis of two decades of monthly surveys from Israel, we argue that real-world influences on public attitudes in conflicts have a meaningful but underexplored temporal dimension. While we corroborate the common argument that violence levels depress support and hope for compromise, we find that this influence is immediate and brief and does not change the long-term trajectory of public opinion. By contrast, non-violent events carrying visible signals about the other side's preferences and the conflict's future, including failed negotiation meetings and hawkish leadership selection, have a lagged but longer-term effect on national public opinion, lasting for months and even years. This conclusion is supported both by average patterns found in a general error-correction model and by an inductive structural breakpoint analysis matched with real-world events.

These dynamically divergent influences—and particularly the political events that unfolded in 2006, 2009, 2013, and 2016—are consistent with the two theoretical logics suggested in the paper. The sudden but fleeting effect of violence on attitudes implies an immediate reaction to a direct and palpable danger, rising and falling with the sense of physical threat that it triggers. By contrast, the lagged but longer-lasting reactions to non-violent information resemble rational belief updating after the new information and top-down cues are processed. While we do not test these behavioral mechanisms directly, our aggregate findings open new avenues for micro-behavioral research on their parallel influence, their different temporal implications, and their interrelations. Moreover, given the literature's focus on the influence of violence, more theoretical and empirical work is needed on real-world informational signals and their role in the long-term development of public opinion in various conflicts.

The latter point is particularly important for real-world initiatives advancing conflict resolution. Our findings imply that visible public attempts to manage or resolve conflicts by international and domestic actors can be a two-edged sword if unsuccessful. In the Israeli case, we saw that futile negotiation initiatives, especially when pushed by outside actors, not only failed to advance peace but also left an enduring negative mark on Israeli popular support and hope for compromise. Similarly, the way the international and local actors frame and react to the political choices made by one side to the conflict, such as the negative messages on Hamas's looming government, can have deep and long-lasting adverse implications on the other side's attitudes about resolution. Even indirect cues, such as unconditional one-sided support by an influential international actor, can move public opinion about resolution in noticeable ways. To the extent that popular attitudes about peace matter, visible actions and cues by international and local elites must be made carefully and with a proper understanding of their possible long-term repercussions.

As noted earlier, our focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict offers valuable insights but raises inherent questions about generalizability. Three contextual issues stand out, marking both the promise and limits of our conclusions as well as directions for further comparative research. First, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has lasted for over a century and has become embedded in Israeli politics and society, raising the concern that Israelis have become uniquely desensitized to violence. This worry, however, is inconsistent with a large body of evidence showing that the conflict's violence triggers noteworthy emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral reactions among Israelis at both the micro and macro levels (e.g., Berrebi and Klor 2008; Besser and Neria 2009; Fielding and Penny 2009; Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014; Gould and Klor 2010; Hirsch-Hoefler et al. 2014; Peffley, Hutchison, and Shamir 2015). Moreover, our conclusions are compatible with findings from several European countries, where terrorist attacks at home or abroad have likewise led only to short-lived attitudinal shifts on security policies and social trust (Arvanitidis, Economou, and Kollias 2016; Economou and Kollias 2019; Finseraas and Listhaug 2013; Geys and Qari 2017). Thus, we generally expect to find similar temporal patterns elsewhere, although more comparative dynamic analyses are needed.

Second, the period that we analyze had few positive diplomatic breakthroughs. Our data, accordingly, do not test directly how aggregate public attitudes react to significant advancements in negotiations, which often come with temporary setbacks and violence. Descriptive data from the 1990s, the heyday of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, do not show notable changes in

Israeli public attitudes following positive diplomatic developments (Hermann and Yuchtman-Yaar 2002). This pattern fits the expectation that negative events have stronger power than positive ones. Nevertheless, recent experimental research finds that optimistic information about the adversary can increase support for compromise under certain conditions (Halperin et al. 2011; Leshem and Halperin 2020). Hence, a fuller understanding of this issue requires additional dynamic analyses of attitudinal changes in other periods and regions that experienced real progress toward peace.

Finally, our focus on the Jewish Israeli public analyzes popular reactions among the stronger group in an asymmetrical conflict. However, these and other processes may manifest differently among minorities or weaker groups in uneven settings. Jaeger et al. (2012), for example, find similar short-lived Palestinian reactions to targeted Israeli violence but also a greater sensitivity to collateral violence of the sort endured more regularly in the territories. Accordingly, we need more direct comparisons of dynamic reactions across power hierarchies in asymmetrical conflicts. Our findings, we hope, help facilitate such future endeavors.

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