Long-term Change in Conflict Attitudes: A Dynamic Perspective

Alon Yakter
Tel Aviv University
ayakter@tauex.tau.ac.il

Liran Harsgor
University of Haifa
lharsgor@poli.haifa.ac.il

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Abstract

A large literature examines how citizens in violent conflicts react to the conflict's events, particularly violent escalations. Nevertheless, the temporal dynamics of these attitudinal changes remain understudied. We suggest that popular reactions to greater violence are immediate but typically brief, indicating short-term emotional responses to physical threats. Over the longer term, however, public opinion is commonly shaped by non-violent political events signaling the adversary's perceived intentions, reflecting slower and deeper belief-updating processes. We support this argument using dynamic analyses of comprehensive monthly data from Israel spanning two full decades (2001-2020). We find that long-term changes in Jewish attitudes on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict follow non-violent events implying Palestinian preferences, particularly failed negotiations and out-group leadership changes, rather than violence levels. Our findings underscore the importance of public opinion's temporal dynamics and show that non-violent events, often overlooked in the literature, play a prominent role in shaping long-term attitudes in conflictual contexts.

Introduction

How do various events in violent conflicts affect public opinion over time? This question lies at the heart of discussions about popular attitudes in contexts involving political violence, war, and reconciliation. Past research has significantly advanced our knowledge of public reactions to key events in conflictual contexts, particularly violence by adversary groups. Nevertheless, the literature focuses predominantly on short or static timeframes, exploring cross-sectional attitudinal differences between individuals and contexts at frozen moments in time. We know far less about the temporal dynamics of these influences: which events leave a longer mark on public opinion? Does their impact vary in duration and erosion rate? And what theoretical processes do such patterns imply?

In this paper, we argue that the immediacy and longevity of public-opinion changes in conflicts vary by the type of event to which they react. We discuss two event types. The first includes violent actions by an adversary, which pose an instant, palpable threat to the in-group. Accordingly, their influence on public opinion tends to be instantaneous but short-lived, reflecting immediate emotional responses that lapse as the danger subsides. The second type comprises non-violent political events that signal new information about the adversary's perceived intentions and conflict's future. Due to the complex meaning of such signals, these events typically have a lagged but longer-lasting attitudinal effect, implying slower but deeper belief-updating processes. Therefore, we expect that the second type of events, often overlooked in the literature, carry greater and longer-term implications for public opinion than violence.

We test these hypotheses on Jewish-Israeli public opinion regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the turn of the century. Using unique data from the Peace Index, a comprehensive monthly time series spanning two full decades (2001-2020), we examine how these aggregate attitudes react to real-world violence and non-violent political events over time. We test our argument with two complementary methods: first, an error-correction model that estimates average patterns of attitudinal shifts following prespecified events, and second, a structural breakpoint analysis that inductively identifies key moments of long-term change in attitudes. Like past research, we find that greater violence by the adversary promptly depresses aggregate support and hope for compromise among Jewish Israelis. However, this influence lasts only briefly before public opinion reverts to its previous levels. By contrast, failed negotiation summits and hawkish leadership changes on the Palestinian side, both non-violent political events sending negative

signals about the latter's perceived intentions, exert a lagged but longer influence on the long-term trajectory of Jewish-Israeli attitudes. Indeed, our data show that in the past two decades, the two largest structural attitudinal changes followed the victory of Islamist movement Hamas in the 2006 Palestinian election and the failed attempts to restart negotiations in 2009. A close examination of these critical moments provides additional qualitative insight into their dynamics and the role of elite cues.

The paper contributes to the larger debate about the temporal dynamics of public opinion, particularly in conflictual and violent contexts. Our findings demonstrate that changes in public attitudes vary in pace, duration, and size depending on the type of threat and information to which citizens are exposed. While our analysis confirms that violence negatively affects attitudes, we demonstrate that such findings are incomplete without considering their temporal dimension. Moreover, focusing on immediate reactions and violence may miss the lagged but longer-term impact of other, non-violent developments that can shape attitudes for months and years.

Whereas this insight is particularly relevant for active conflicts, it also applies to more sporadic incidents of terrorism and domestic violence with similarly fleeting attitudinal reactions (Arvanitidis, Economou, and Kollias 2016; Breton and Eady 2022; Economou and Kollias 2019; Finseraas and Listhaug 2013; Geys and Qari 2017; Sharkey and Shen 2021). It can further inform a broader range of questions about the short- and long-term influence of other shocks, including economic crises, immigration waves, natural disasters, pandemics, and other global and domestic events.

Finally, our findings are especially important to understand the types of factors and actions that advance or impede resolution in prolonged conflicts. Specifically, we demonstrate that non-violent political actions and cues by international and local actors can significantly shift public opinion for lengthy periods, often unintendedly. Public signals about the conflict's future and each side's goals, therefore, should be planned carefully and strategically.

The paper proceeds with a brief review of existing explanations for attitudinal changes in conflictual settings and discusses their underexplored temporal dimension. We then suggest two dynamic logics that contrast immediate emotional reactions with slower belief-updating processes. After presenting the Israeli case and data, we test our expectations empirically and discuss broader implications and limitations.

Violence, Information, and the Missing Dynamic Perspective

An extensive literature has studied the types of real-world events that influence public attitudes in conflictual contexts. Of these factors, violence received the greatest attention (Godefroidt 2022). According to multiple recent studies, 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; Maoz and McCauley 2005; Vasilopoulos et al. 2019) and increases ethnocentrism and intolerance (Echebarria-Echabe and Fernández-Guede 2006; Kam and Kinder 2007; Peffley, Hutchison, and Shamir 2015). These reactions tend to amplify support for aggressive security policies (Brouard, Vasilopoulos, and Foucault 2018; Kupatadze and Zeitzoff 2021), preference for hawkish and oppositionist politicians (Aytaç and Çarkoğlu 2021; Bali 2007; Berrebi and Klor 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; Hirsch-Hoefler et al. 2014).

In some cases, nevertheless, violence can increase popular support for peaceful agreements and moderate politicians (Arian, Shamir, and Ventura 1992; Gould and Klor 2010; Tellez 2019). Such conciliatory attitudes are more likely when it activates feelings of anxiety and weariness, raises concerns about additional future hostilities, and foster a greater desire to end the bloodshed (Beber, Roessler, and Scacco 2014; Hazlett 2020; Huddy et al. 2005).

While the influence of violence has been researched extensively, several behavioral studies find that out-group perceptions and support for compromise also react to new information about the adversary's goals and the conflict's future. Such signals can include direct or indirect impressions of out-group intentions (Hall et al. 2018; Halperin et al. 2011; Leshem and Halperin 2020), bilateral negotiation summits (Rosler, Cohen-Chen, and Halperin 2017), or declarations by international actors (Shelef and Zeira 2017). They are typically accepted more easily when reaffirming negative preconceptions of the conflict and out-group (Halperin and Bar-Tal 2011; Nyhan and Zeitzoff 2018; Sheafer and Dvir-Gvirsman 2010), although salient signals from the adversary can sometimes induce hope (Leshem 2019).

Nevertheless, most studies, whether focused on violence or information, share similar vagueness about their dynamic dimension. This ambiguity leaves several important questions understudied: how long does the influence of different events endure in the public's mind? How quickly do they take effect and at what pace do they erode? And to what extent do they shape the

long-term trajectory of public opinion? Many studies—particularly tests for causal mechanisms in controlled or quasi-controlled environments—focus on attitudinal change immediately after specific events or stimuli. Others analyze their correlations with attitudes at a later but frozen point in time, be it days, weeks, or years after the event took place. These static lags between cause and effect are often selected by arbitrary data-collection limitations rather than theoretical or empirical reasons. Finally, even when the data include multiple periods, most time series tend to be short, have relatively large gaps, and lack in-depth analyses of long-term temporal structures.[1]

Immediate Threats and Long-Term Belief Updating

We posit that the temporal influence of different events—their immediacy, duration, and erosion rate—depends on their type, and specifically their level of physical threat and the certainty of their meaning. Based on these attributes, we single out two types of influential events. The first includes violent actions against the in-group, which pose an immediate and palpable threat to one's personal and collective safety. They also convey a clear, self-evident meaning: the out-group wishes to harm the in-group. As past research finds, such direct and tangible threats instantly trigger potent negative emotions and attitudes (e.g., Huddy et al. 2002; Wohl, Branscombe, and Reysen 2010). Since these instinctive reactions stem from a concrete threat, we hypothesize that they would wax and wane with its temporal presence, i.e., be strongest right after the violent event and subside as the physical peril grows distant. As noted, the literature suggests mixed expectations about the direction of this influence: most studies expect that violence should deepen negative attitudes about compromise, while others anticipate a positive change. Thus, we can establish two competing hypotheses about the temporal influence of violence on public attitudes regarding the conflict:

> ***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.*

[1] For example, some studies (e.g., Berrebi and Klor 2008; Peffley, Hutchison, and Shamir 2015) use time-series data to determine the statistically optimal lag between violent events and subsequent public reactions. However, they then employ this lag as a static covariate rather than explore broader dynamic patterns. For exceptions, see Fielding and Penny (2009) and Jaeger et al. (2012), albeit with notably shorter and sparser time series compared to our analysis.

The second event type offers new information about the adversary's perceived goals and the conflict's future without posing an immediate physical threat. Such events can take various idiosyncratic forms. For example, intergroup negotiations that visibly reveal the other side's demands and willingness to compromise send a signal about their collective preferences. Similar cues are also sent when the out-group publicly selects leaders and seemingly backs their ideological visions for the conflict. Some non-violent events, especially large-scale protests, can be perceived as physically threatening due to their mass nature and out-group stereotypes (Manekin and Mitts 2022). Our reference to non-violence, therefore, excludes such events.

Following our earlier logic, the lack of a perceived physical threat lowers the odds of immediate emotional reactions. Moreover, it also carries greater uncertainty regarding the signal's meaning. New and complex information typically requires additional top-down cues and public narratives for proper cognitive and emotional processing (Berinsky 2009; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Zaller 1992). These slower processes, accordingly, resemble rational belief updating rather than visceral responses (Gordon and Arian 2001). Therefore, we expect that salient non-violent signals about the adversary would take longer to factor into popular attitudes, but, once they do, become entrenched for lengthier periods. We can thus 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 more slowly but for longer periods than violence.*

Our argument has two noteworthy scope conditions. First, in extreme cases, violent events can create lasting traumas that sustain long after the danger passes. This often occurs to individuals that experienced violence directly and developed post-traumatic stress disorder (Bonanno and Jost 2006; Hirsch-Hoefler et al. 2014), yet their numbers are usually too small to shift aggregate public opinion. However, outstanding large-scale atrocities, such as indiscriminate mass violence or forced population transfers, can form collective victimhood narratives passed down through generations (Balcells 2012; Lupu and Peisakhin 2017; Rozenas, Schutte, and Zhukov 2017). Our theoretical hypotheses disregard such extreme cases given their rarity, but students of violence of this scale may need to adjust expectations accordingly.

Second, some violent events can signal new information about the adversary's intentions alongside their immediate physical threat. This outcome is more likely in nascent or dormant

conflicts with high uncertainty about the other side's identity, goals, and behavior. In such contexts, violence, too, may change public opinion for lengthier periods. Nevertheless, we do not expect such long-term implications in active conflicts, where the adversary and core disagreements are salient and known.

In what follows, we test our hypotheses empirically using a dynamic analysis of hundreds of monthly public opinion surveys conducted regularly 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 change endures. Before elaborating on our methodological approach, 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 and politics (Arian and Shamir 2008; Shamir and Arian 1999), yet, despite its enduring presence, its progression has been quite dynamic. In the past decades, the Israeli public faced differing degrees of violence, including two large-scale violent campaigns (*Intifadas*), ebbs and flows of small-scale terrorist attacks and rocket shelling, and extended calmer periods.[2] The nature of violence itself varies too, shifting periodically between local stone throwing, lone wolf attacks, large-scale suicide and car bombings, and rocket shelling. The conflict has also provided multiple opportunities to assess the other side's intentions. The past decades included several rounds of peace negotiations, some prolonged with meaningful advancements, particularly in the 1990s and briefly in the mid-2000s, and others shorter and futile. Both sides also made leadership changes over the years, signaling alternating popular support for more combative or moderate visions of the conflict.

The temporal variation in violence and non-violent political signals, the two types of events on which we hypothesize, deem Israel particularly fitting to test our argument. They also mark the boundaries of our analysis, a point discussed further in the paper's conclusion. Most significantly, the conflict's rich temporal dynamics are testable due to its protracted nature. As such, our broader inferences should be considered carefully where hostilities are experienced as a single shock with long-term traumatic effects and/or the adversary is relatively unfamiliar. Nevertheless, as Peffley,

[2] The conflict infamously inflicts asymmetrical violence on the Palestinians. Due to the scope of our data and lack of comparatively comprehensive time series involving Palestinians, we only discuss the experience of Israelis.

Hutchison, and Shamir (2015, 819) observe, Israel's experience with violence is "distinctive but not unique" and comparable with dozens of other countries and democracies. Indeed, as more societies endure recurrent conflicts and political violence, so do Israeli patterns become more relevant and generalizable.

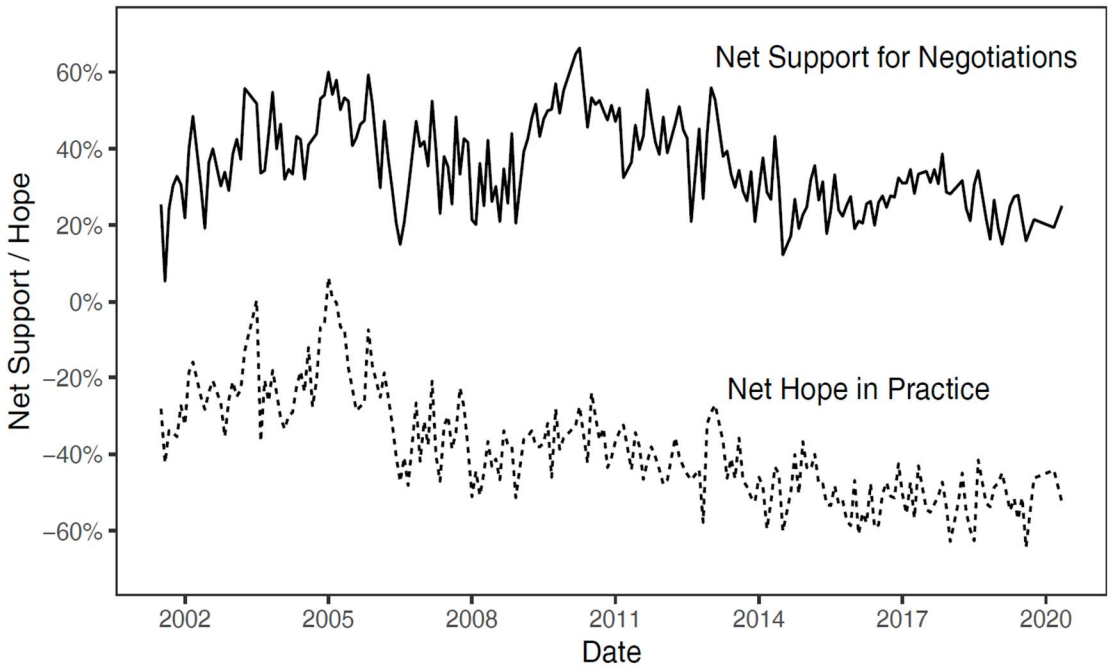
Public Attitudes about the Conflict: The Peace Index Data

Our primary outcome of interest is Israeli public attitudes on the conflict's resolution. To examine these attitudes over time, we pooled hundreds of public opinion surveys from the Peace Index, a survey project established in the 1990s at Tel Aviv University. The Peace Index has regularly conducted monthly representative surveys with a small set of recurring questions about the peace process, alongside interchanging questions on current events. These data, therefore, offer a unique opportunity to examine national attitudes on the conflict using identical questions measured in short and regular intervals over two full decades.

We analyze two dependent variables using a pair of questions that have been asked regularly starting July 2001. The first dependent variable gauges *ideological support for negotiations in principle* with the following question: "What is your position on conducting peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority?" The second dependent variable measures *pragmatic hope that a peace agreement will be achieved in practice* as follows: "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 from "Strongly in favor/believe" to "strongly opposed"/"do not believe at all". We examine both dimensions separately as they have been shown to vary at times despite a strong correlation (Leshem and Halperin 2020; Yakter and Tessler 2022).

While each monthly survey draws a new respondent sample, their representative design produces a reliable time series of aggregate public attitudes. Accordingly, our two dependent variables measure the monthly aggregate net support for each statement, i.e., the total share of negative answers subtracted from the share of positive answers every month. Since Arab citizens have been included inconsistently throughout the series, we aggregate only answers from Israel's Jewish majority. Moreover, we expect Arab citizens, many of whom identify as ethnic Palestinians, to display different attitudinal patterns regarding the conflict. Hence, the reactions of

***Figure 1**. Net Support for Negotiations and Net Hope about Peace in Practice, 7/2001–5/2020.*



ethnic minorities in ethnonational conflicts merit a separate theoretical and empirical framework outside the scope of this paper.

Both variables comprise 227 months from July 2001 to May 2020. Of these months, twenty-five have missing observations. Section 2 in the Supplementary Material (SM) shows that the missing observations are spaced far apart and uncorrelated with the conflict's violence and non-violent events. Both series also display strong serial autocorrelation. Hence, we impute the missing observations using a simple linear interpolation. SM Section 2 offers additional discussion and robustness tests for this choice.

Figure 1 plots both time series. The data show that aggregate net support for negotiations has remained positive throughout the past twenty years notwithstanding occasional ebbs and flows. Aggregate net hope of their prospects is consistently lower although noticeably correlated with the former. Our analysis attempts to illuminate the dynamic nature of these trends using two complementary methods. First, we estimate a general error-correction model with prespecified explanatory variables to find average reactive patterns throughout the entire period. Second, we employ a structural breakpoint analysis to inductively identify critical junctures of long-term attitudinal change and then qualitatively investigate nearby 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 of Attitudinal Change

Independent Variables

We begin by estimating attitudinal changes by several independent variables of monthly violence levels and non-violent signals. Two independent variables gauge the monthly levels of Palestinian violence experienced by Israelis. The first counts the *monthly number of Israeli casualties* by Palestinian actions.[3] 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.[4] 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 cause meaningful psychological, social, and political effects (Besser and Neria 2009; Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014; Zeitzoff 2014). Because casualties and rockets have unevenly high peaks and a likely decreasing marginal influence, we take the natural logarithm of both.[5]

Next, we construct two variables to measure non-violent political events signaling Palestinian intentions.[6] Coding such events *ex ante* is not trivial. Since they can take multiple idiosyncratic forms, an open coding scheme may introduce coder bias in favor of high-impact events while overlooking comparable incidents with low influence. Thus, we focus conservatively on two event types that can be coded systematically. The first variable is a dummy indicating months with *public Israeli-Palestinian negotiation meetings*. Public negotiation summits send salient signals about the out-group's demands, willingness to compromise, and distance from the in-group's positions. Our data include five negotiation meetings between 2001 and 2020 that were

[3] Casualty data from B'Tselem (https://www.btselem.org/statistics).
[4] We code rocket data based on monthly reports by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/)
[5] To deal with zeros, we take the natural log of each month's count plus one. Since high peaks in casualties and rockets often indicate periods with direct combat, we do not model military operations separately.
[6] Naturally, the media is a primary source for such signals. Yet for our purposes, the media acts as a mediating channel for external events rather than an initiator. Media coverage in Israel displays a stable tendency to frame the conflict's events negatively (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 an invariable constant.

publicly known in real time, reflecting the conflict's diplomatic gridlock in this period. Such meetings can send either a negative or a positive signal, depending on their conclusions. However, due to their futility throughout our sample, we code all these meetings as negative signals.

The second variable gauges *Palestinian hawkish leadership selection* using a categorical score that indicates 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 of the conflict. Our sample includes four such moments. In January 2005, a positive signal was sent when the relatively moderate Mahmoud Abbas was elected president after Yassir Arafat's death.[7] The three negative events signaled popular support for Hamas, a militant Islamist movement that has continuously engaged in violence against Israel: in March 2006, Hamas formed the Palestinian government for the first time after winning a majority of seats in the legislative election; in March 2007, it headed a new 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 parallel government 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.[8] Second, we use the *real average monthly wage of Israeli hired workers* (constant 2011 prices) to control for the state of the economy, which may influence the public mood regardless of the conflict.[9] Third, we include a *monthly time trend* (i.e., a monthly counter) to account for a possible monotonic decline in support or hope for peace irrespective of specific events. SM Section 1 presents descriptive plots of all variables.

Model Setup

To examine the dynamic relationship between the two attitudinal variables and our independent variables, we estimate a general error-correction model (GECM) using an OLS regression (De

[7] Arafat was perceived by most Jewish Israelis as a violent extremist. In the October 2004 Peace Index survey, weeks before his death, 74.9% of Jewish respondents stated that Arafat controlled street-level Palestinian violence and 78.7% described him as a terrorist rather than legitimate statesman. In January 2005, after Abbas was elected, 57.3% of Jewish respondents agreed that he is making sincere efforts to stop Palestinian violence and only 31.7% disagreed.

[8] Our argument implies that in-group elite cues are a possible mechanism for information processing following salient political events. To verify that changes in the Israeli cabinet's partisanship do not mediate the influence of non-violent signals, we re-estimated our models without this covariate. The results remain substantively unchanged.

[9] Israel's cconsumer satisfaction survey, measuring subjective economic perceptions more directly, is available only starting 2011. The average wage, nevertheless, is strongly correlated (r=0.75) with this index.

Boef and Keele 2008). The GECM regresses changes in the dependent 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:

$$\Delta y_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 y_{t-1} + \boldsymbol{\beta_0'} \Delta \boldsymbol{X_t} + \boldsymbol{\beta_1'} \boldsymbol{X_{t-1}} + \epsilon_t$$

where Δy_t is the change in the dependent variable, α_1 estimates the influence of its levels one period earlier (also known as the error-correction term), $\boldsymbol{\beta_0'}$ estimate the immediate effects of a one-unit change in independent variables $\boldsymbol{X_t}$, and $\boldsymbol{\beta_1'}$ estimate the lagged effect of the latter's levels in the previous period. The inclusion of both first differences and lagged values separates each independent variable's immediate and delayed effects on the outcome. The model's error-correction term (α_1) reflects the monthly rate at which the outcome adjusts back to its former levels after the explanatory variables changed. Hence, it tells us how quickly their influences erode.

To avoid bias, the GECM requires that all variables have the same order of integration (Grant and Lebo 2016; Keele, Linn, and Webb 2016). Multiple unit root tests, specified in SM Section 3, indicate that all our variables are stationary except the share of Israeli right-wing cabinet seats. This variable, therefore, is modeled only at first difference.

We select the GECM's proper number of lags using a general-to-specific approach, detailed in SM Section 4. In short, we iterated our models with different combinations of lag lengths for each variable, picking the number of lags that optimized model fit and coefficient t-tests scores. The procedure favored a single monthly lag for logged rockets, logged casualties, and average wage, and two monthly lags for negotiation meetings and Palestinian leadership changes, foreshadowing a temporally intricate effect, as we shall see.[10]

Finally, we tested for serial autocorrelation in our models using Ljung-Box and Breusch-Godfrey tests. In both series, dynamic completeness is achieved after adding the first difference of the lagged dependent variable (Δy_{t-1}). Additional Ljung-Box tests reject concerns of seasonality in the data. All tests are specified in SM Section 5.

[10] Algebraically, once the GCM includes an independent variable's first and second lag, its first difference (ΔX_t) is replaced with its second difference ($\Delta^2 X_t$).

GECM Findings

Table 1 presents the GECM estimations. For ease of interpretation, both net attitudes are measured on a scale of 1-100 rather than percentages. The first-difference coefficients indicate that greater violence leads to an instant decline in both net support and net hope for peace. On average, an increase of one standard deviation in the logged number of rockets immediately lowers the aggregate net support for negotiations by 1.57 points and net hope in their prospects by 1.15 points. Similarly, a one-standard-deviation increase in logged casualties instantly decreases net support for negotiations by an average of 1.92 points and net hope by 1.72 points. These results corroborate the hypothesis that greater violence immediately dampens public attitudes regarding resolution (H1.a) and rejects a positive relationship (H1.b). Conversely, we do not see sudden attitudinal changes following negotiation meetings or Palestinian leadership changes, consistent with their expected lagged effect (H2).

We examine the model's broader temporal dynamics in two steps. First, we calculate each explanatory variable's long-run multiplier (LRM), presented at the bottom of Table 1. Calculated as $LRM_x = -\frac{\beta_1}{\alpha_1}$, these scores reflect the total cumulative influence of each independent variable across all future months. We estimate the LRMs' confidence levels using the bounds test proposed by Webb, Linn, and Lebo (2020). The test has three possible outcomes: no long-term relationship (a t-statistic below the lower bound), a statistically indeterminate long-term relationship (a t-statistic in between the bounds), and a statistically significant long-term relationship (a t-statistic above the upper bound). Most LRMs in our model fit the middle category, indicating ambiguous statistical confidence. Rockets, however, have a strictly insignificant long-run effect.[11]

Second, we compute the temporal distribution of these cumulative effects over time. This calculation is based on each variable's immediate effect at time t (β_0), follow-up effect at $t+1$ (β_1) and $t+2$ where relevant, and monthly erosion rate thereafter (α_1). Figure 2 plots the monthly distribution of each variable's long-term influence after a one-off one-standard-deviation increase.

[11] According to Getmansky and Zeitzoff (2014), the expanding rocket range gradually shifted more Israeli voters rightward. We run two tests to rule out similar temporal heterogeneity in our models. First, we reestimated our analysis while interacting the logged rocket count—its first difference, its first lag, and then both simultaneously—with a dummy indicating the period after rockets were first shot at the Tel Aviv metropolitan area (November 2012). Second, to gauge a more gradual increase in threat, we also interacted the logged rockets variables with a simple yearly count. All interaction terms produced null results.

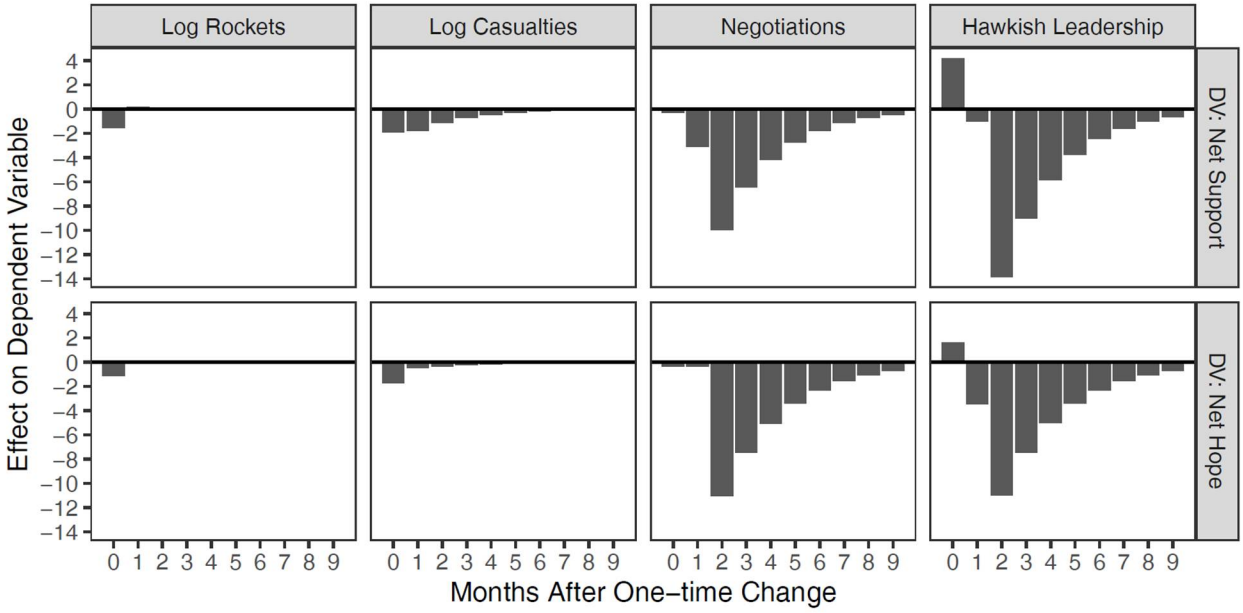
Table 1. *Aggregate Attitudinal Changes*

	(1) ΔNet Support for Negotiations		(2) ΔNet Hope for Peace	
	β	S.E.	β	S.E.
Net Support$_{t-1}$	-0.351***	(0.056)		
ΔNet Support$_{t-1}$	-0.143*	(0.061)		
Net Hope$_{t-1}$			-0.323***	(0.063)
ΔNet Hope$_{t-1}$			-0.148*	(0.065)
ΔLog Rockets	-0.890**	(0.316)	-0.654*	(0.302)
Log Rockets$_{t-1}$	-0.221	(0.333)	-0.185	(0.318)
ΔLog 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)
ΔRight Israeli Cabinet	0.077	(0.075)	0.060	(0.072)
ΔAverage Wage	-0.002	(0.001)	0.001	(0.001)
Average Wage$_{t-1}$	-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)
Long-Run Multipliers (LRM)				
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)
N	225		225	
R^2	0.376		0.362	
Breusch-Godfrey LM Test	1.113 (*p*=0.292)		2.521 (*p*=0.112)	

Note: The dependent variables are on a 1-100 scale. Standard errors in parentheses, † p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001. § Indeterminate 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. The LRM standard errors are calculated with the delta method. Cumulative sum (CUSUM) tests verify parameter stability throughout both series.

For negotiations and hawkish leadership change, which are binary/categorical, we assume an increase by 1.

Figure 2*. Lag Distribution after a One-Standard-Deviation Increase in Each Independent Variable (Dummy/Categorical Variables Increase by 1).*



The resulting patterns tell a temporally intricate story. In both models, the negative influence of rocket shelling lapses after a single month. An increase in casualties has a similarly fleeting effect on the aggregate hope for peace. The influence of more casualties on the aggregate willingness to negotiate is slightly less forgiving: a one-standard-deviation increase 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. More casualties, therefore, do not deepen pessimism about the prospects of peace beyond a single month, but they do have a slightly larger and longer dampening influence on support for diplomacy. Nevertheless, the broader pattern supports H1.a: greater violence levels undermine support and hope for compromise immediately, yet this influence erodes rather quickly.

Non-violent political events exhibit the opposite dynamic. Both negotiation meetings and hawkish leadership changes have a lagged but longer-term demoralizing influence on public attitudes, barely moving at first but then plummeting two months after the events and eroding gradually thereafter. Curiously, hawkish leadership changes create a positive immediate effect, perhaps reflecting an initial hope for pragmatic moderation under the pressures of leadership. Nevertheless, this effect is statistically insignificant and turns negative one month later. While the LRM bounds tests are statistically indeterminate regarding the full extent of these long-run

influences, the GECM indicates that the largest dip, taking place at *t+2*, is statistically significant for both negotiations and leadership changes. These results, therefore, support H2, indicating that informational signals have a lagged but prolonged influence on aggregate public attitudes regarding resolution.

An Inductive Analysis of Influential Events

The GECM estimation is instructive but has several limitations. First, it models average attitudinal changes after events that can be coded systematically, yet such incidents can take various idiosyncratic forms that are hard to operationalize *ex ante*. This is particularly true for singular moments such as deeply traumatic violent acts or other types of unique events reshaping prior conceptions. Second, the statistical indetermination of the LRM bounds tests muddies our full confidence in the long-term influence of non-violent signals. Finally, the average patterns provide little information about the real-world dynamics accompanying significant moments of prolonged attitudinal change.

To address these issues, we employ an inductive structural breakpoint analysis of our two series. Rather than prespecified independent variables, structural breakpoint analyses detect moments of significant change based on the underlying structure of the data. Once such points are identified statistically, we can qualitatively examine real-world events that occurred at these times and assess their fit with our hypotheses (Caporale and Grier 2005; Wawro and Katznelson 2014). Theoretically, we expect that long-term breaks in the two attitudinal series will follow salient non-violent events implying Palestinian intentions and the conflict's future and not violent escalations. Alternatively, if our hypotheses are too narrow, this approach can discover other influential event types that we may have missed.

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 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.[12] Since both series show signs of trend stationarity, we include a temporal trend term in the estimation.

[12] A robustness check identifies the same breakpoints with BIC and Liu-Wu-Zidek (LWZ) tests.

Figure 3*. Structural Breakpoints (Dashed Vertical Lines) in Aggregate Net Support for Negotiations (Top Panel) and Net Hope for Peace in Practice (Bottom Panel)*

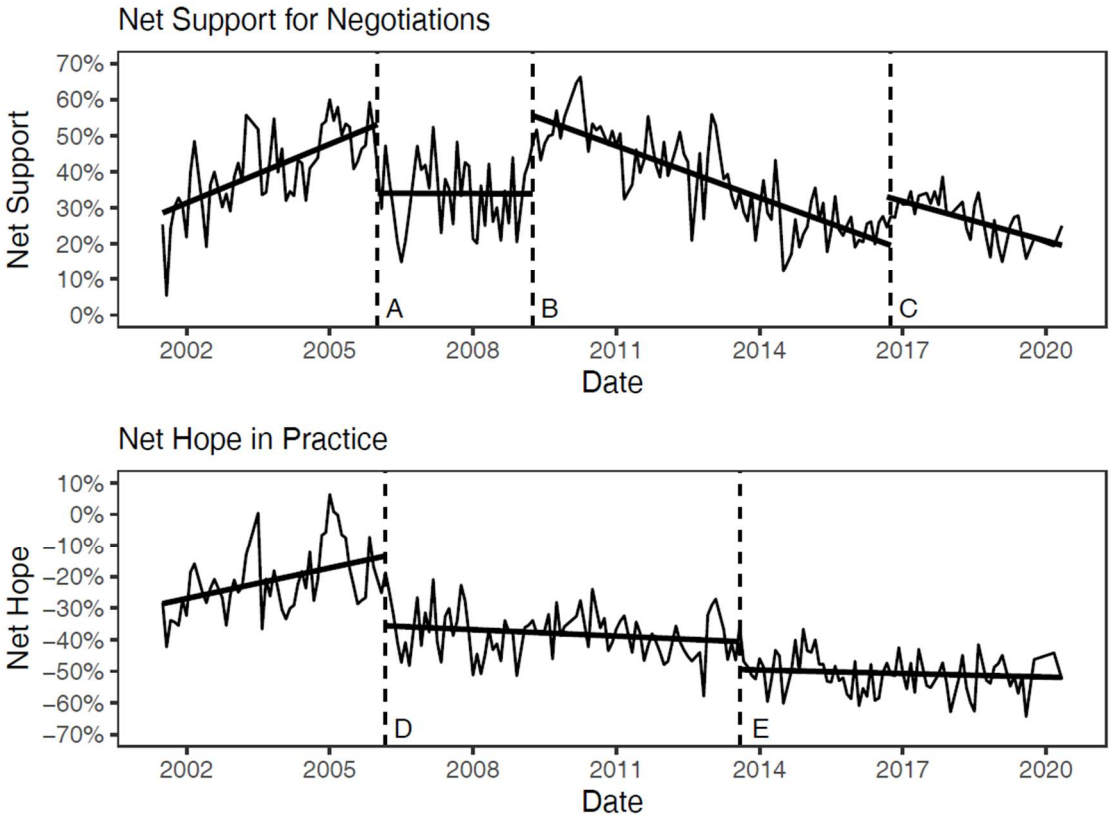


Figure 3 plots the estimated breakpoints in aggregate net support and hope for compromise. In each series, the dashed vertical lines mark identified breakpoints while the fitted lines display the average trend in each subperiod. The aggregate net support for negotiations, presented in the top panel,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

The descriptive characteristics of these breakpoints are summarized in Table 2. The first two columns indicate whether each structural breakpoint displays changes in absolute levels and/or long-term trend and their direction.[13] These shifts show both the similarities and differences between the two series. 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) that lasted several years. The aggregate net support for negotiations, but not net hope,

[13] The direction and significance of each change are corroborated econometrically by interrupted time-series models, detailed in SM Section 6.1.

Table 2. *Structural Breakpoint Characteristics*

	Direction of Change		*Violence Levels*	*Non-Violent Events*
	In Levels	*In Trend*		
Net Support				
A. Jan. 2006	-	-	Low	Hamas wins election
B. Apr. 2009	+	-	Low	Diplomatic momentum and failure
C. Oct. 2016	+	No Change	Low	Trump wins election
Net Hope				
D. Apr. 2006	-	-	Average	Hamas forms government
E. Sep. 2013	-	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 SM Section 6.1). Violence levels are considered vis-à-vis sample and annual averages (see SM Section 6.2).

temporarily bounced back in early 2009 (point B) before gradually eroding again. Practical hope for peace, by contrast, never rebounded after 2006. The last breakpoints in both series—September 2013 (point E) and October 2016 (point C)—exhibit relatively smaller changes in levels without shifting the long-term trend.

Which factors can explain these breaks? The third column in Table 2 summarizes the relative rocket and casualty levels at each point compared to the sample average.[14] Corroborating our hypotheses and earlier findings, none of the long-term breaks occurred in particularly violent moments. By contrast, as the fourth column indicates, all moments can be linked with non-violent political events that sent salient signals about Palestinian preferences and/or the conflict's future. Moreover, as we expect, most involve leadership changes or failed negotiations. To gain better insight into their influence, we turn to examine each moment in greater detail. We pay particular attention to the first three breakpoints, which exhibit the largest structural changes in both attitudinal levels and trends.

January-April 2006: Hamas's Electoral Victory

The first notable breakpoint in both series occurred in January-April 2006 (points A and D). The early months of 2006 featured two political developments: the Palestinian legislative elections and subsequent government formation (January and April) and the Israeli general elections (March). Of the two, the Israeli election seems less consequential. The elections were won handily by the incumbent party Kadima. According to the post-election Peace Index survey, most respondents

[14] SM Section 6.2 presents a detailed comparison of each point with sample, decade, and annual averages.

supported the winning coalition and split along expected partisan and ideological lines. The Israeli election, therefore, reinforced the political status quo.

The Palestinian election, by contrast, seems like a watershed moment. The Palestinian Legislative Council election was held for the first time in a decade after a long single-party reign by the Fatah party. Yet, defying earlier expectations, most seats were surprisingly won by extremist Hamas. In reality, Hamas's success reflected public frustration with Fatah, in-fighting among their opponents, and advantageous electoral rules rather than popular support for its militant agenda (Shamir and Shikaki 2010). However, to Israeli eyes, the victory signaled a Palestinian preference for violent extremism. In the January 2006 Peace Index survey, 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 due to additional elite cues, 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 non-violence. Hamas, however, blatantly rejected these conditions, triggering severe international and Israeli economic sanctions once the new government was formed. The Israeli public took 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 violence (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 public refusal to disavow violence and recognize Israel after its victory, combined with an aggressive international and Israeli delegitimization campaign, amplified the signal about Palestinian choice of violent extremism over compromise. The result was a years-long drop in aggregate Jewish-Israeli support and hope for compromise.

Early 2009: American-led Diplomatic Momentum and Failure

Our analysis finds that net support for negotiations, but not practical hopes for peace, bounced back around April 2009 (point B) before declining again in the following year. The main

development in early 2009 signaled a new momentum in the peace process due to political shifts in the US and Israel. In January 2009, US President Barack 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 support for territorial compromise and objection to Israel's settlement policy. Additionally, an Obama-Netanyahu meeting was set for May with this agenda in mind. In the March 2009 Peace Index survey, 62% of Jewish respondents estimated that the Israeli government would strive to 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 negotiations is in Israel's best interest. The lack of a similar rise in practical hope for peace may indicate that many waited for substantial signs that the Palestinians are similarly committed.

Nevertheless, subsequent developments over the following months help explain the slow but renewed decline in support for negotiations. The momentum continued during the summer, with Obama's dovish Cairo Speech and Netanyahu's acceptance of the two-state solution in his Bar-Ilan University address. Furthermore, in November 2009, Israel 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.

Yet the first cracks appeared early and gradually expanded. 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. Most Israelis internalized this cue: 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 do not accept Israel's existence and would destroy it if they could. The 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 aggregate support for negotiations, corroborating our earlier findings of the lagged but long-term influence of failed diplomacy.[15]

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 failed negotiations initiated by US Secretary of State John Kerry. Unlike the positive momentum in 2009, Kerry's initiative never gained steam and ended 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 started, 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 swift, low-key diplomatic failure brought an additional long-term decline in aggregate hope for peace. Echoing our GECM findings, this change became more pronounced a month or two after the direct meetings, as the extent of the failure was properly processed.

October 2016: Trump's Election

The last structural breakpoint (point C) identifies rising support for negotiations after October 2016. The most notable event at this moment was US President Donald Trump's electoral victory in early November.[16] In the Peace Index survey conducted right after the election, 48.5% of Jewish Israelis estimated that Trump favors Israel over the Palestinians and 61.8% assumed he would not oppose and even support settlement construction. By contrast, only 22.2% stated that Obama was friendly to Israel throughout his term. These attitudes fit comparative surveys showing that Israel was one of few countries where Trump was seen favorably during his term (e.g., Wike et al. 2020). Hence, Trump's victory seemed to signal unconditional US support for Israeli demands, leading

[15] Of these intricate developments, our GECM codes only the 2010 summit as the relevant public signal of the Palestinians' true intentions. Hence, the negative pattern in our estimation fits this chronology.

[16] Although the model identifies October as the breakpoint, November is within the margin of error. Figure 3 verifies that the bounce occurs in the following months. Moreover, we could not identify other notable events in October or November.

to a stronger bargaining position vis-à-vis the Palestinians. This cue helps explain the structural bounce in willingness to negotiate even as the practical hope for peace remained low. While this signal does not involve Palestinian intentions, it, too, illustrates the importance of new non-violent information about the conflict's power balance.

Conclusion

Public opinion is a key aspect of violent conflicts, establishing bottom-up pressures that can escalate or moderate the conflict's long-term path. Accordingly, a large literature explores various factors influencing public attitudes in conflictual contexts, with a particular focus on violent incidents. Nevertheless, past findings mostly highlight short-term or static attitudinal reactions, providing incomplete accounts of their full temporal dynamics and other types of influences.

Using two decades of monthly surveys from Israel, we argue that popular reactions to real-world events have a meaningful, yet largely understudied, temporal dimension. Our findings show that Jewish-Israeli support and hope for compromise decreases immediately after violent escalations, but this negative influence lapses quickly and leaves little to no mark on the long-term trajectory of public opinion. Conversely, non-violent political events carrying visible signals about the adversary's preferences and the conflict's future—including failed negotiations and Palestinian leadership changes—have a lagged but larger and longer effect on public attitudes, lasting for months and even years. This conclusion is supported both by average patterns found with a general error-correction model and by an inductive structural breakpoint analysis matched with real-world events.

These divergent temporal patterns are consistent with the two theoretical logics suggested in the paper. The sudden but fleeting effect of violence on attitudes implies an instinctive reaction to a direct and palpable danger, rising and falling with the sense of physical threat. Meanwhile, the lagged but longer-lasting reactions to non-violent signals resemble belief updating through the gradual processing of new information and top-down cues. While we do not test these behavioral mechanisms directly, our aggregate findings open new avenues for micro-behavioral research on their operation, different temporal implications, and interrelations. Moreover, given the literature's focus on violence, more theoretical and empirical work is needed on different types of informational signals in conflictual environments. Our findings, for example, imply that

unexpected information (e.g., Hamas' surprising electoral victory) may have a longer attitudinal influence than expected events.

This point is particularly important for real-world conflict resolution efforts. Our findings show that public attempts to resolve conflicts by international and domestic actors can be a two-edged sword if unsuccessful. In Israel, futile negotiation initiatives, especially when pushed by outside actors, not only failed to advance peace but also left an enduring negative mark on Jewish-Israeli popular support and hope for compromise. Similarly, international and domestic framings of the out-group's political choices, such as the negative campaign against Hamas's looming government, can have long-lasting adverse implications for public support for a resolution. Even indirect cues, such as unconditional one-sided support by international actors, can move public opinion in meaningful ways (cf. Shelef and Zeira 2017). Insofar as popular attitudes about peace matter, actions and cues by global and local elites must be taken carefully and with proper analysis of their potential long-term repercussions.

As noted earlier, our focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict offers important insights but raises questions about generalizability. Three issues stand out, marking both the promise and limits of our conclusions and paths 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 desensitized to violence. This worry, however, is inconsistent with a large body of evidence showing that the conflict's violence continuously triggers emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral reactions in Israel (e.g., Berrebi and Klor 2008; Besser and Neria 2009; Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014; Gould and Klor 2010; Hirsch-Hoefler et al. 2014). Moreover, our conclusions align with multiple findings from other Western countries, where terrorist and civilian attacks at home or abroad have likewise caused only short-lived attitudinal shifts on security policies, social trust, and out-group resentment (Arvanitidis, Economou, and Kollias 2016; Breton and Eady 2022; Economou and Kollias 2019; Finseraas and Listhaug 2013; Geys and Qari 2017; Sharkey and Shen 2021). Thus, we expect similar temporal patterns elsewhere, including shorter and less salient conflicts and other violent contexts, although more comparative dynamic analyses are needed.

Second, the period that we analyze had few positive diplomatic breakthroughs. Our data, accordingly, do not test how aggregate public attitudes react to positive advancements in negotiations, which often involve temporary setbacks and violence. Descriptive data from the

1990s, the heyday of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, fail to show notable spikes in Israeli public attitudes despite positive diplomatic developments (Hermann and Yuchtman-Yaar 2002). This pattern fits the expectation that negative events have a stronger influence 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, we need additional dynamic analyses of attitudinal changes in periods and regions experiencing real progress toward resolution.

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

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