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To cite this article: Rotem Nagar & Ifat Maoz (2014) (Non)acknowledgment of rights as a barrier to conflict resolution: Predicting Jewish Israeli attitudes towards the Palestinian demand for national self-determination, Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict, 7:2-3, 150-164, DOI: 10.1080/17467586.2014.980281

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17467586.2014.980281

Published online: 20 Nov 2014.

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(Non)acknowledgment of rights as a barrier to conflict resolution: Predicting Jewish Israeli attitudes towards the Palestinian demand for national self-determination

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(Received 1 August 2014; accepted 21 October 2014)

A major barrier to resolution of asymmetric conflicts is the unwillingness of the stronger side to see the out-group as having the right to national self-determination. In the context of the conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians, we investigate psychological factors related to this barrier. We first review the threat and dehumanization two-factor model that was developed by Maoz and McCauley to explain Jewish Israeli support of aggressive acts towards Palestinians that hinder the resolution of the conflict. Using this model, we then explore the extent to which perceived threat and dehumanization also predict – together with other ideological and demographic variables – Jewish Israeli attitudes towards Palestinian demands for national self-determination. Implications of the findings for the “barriers” approach in settings of asymmetrical conflict are discussed.

Keywords: barriers to conflict resolution; asymmetric conflict; right for national self-determination; acknowledgment of rights; recognition; threat; dehumanization; protracted conflicts; the Israeli–Palestinian conflict

Introduction

A major contribution to understanding intergroup conflict is the “barriers” approach, which shifts attention from the origins of a conflict to the barriers to settling it. This approach, which has become increasingly prominent in recent decades, identifies powerful barriers that must be addressed in order to achieve conflict resolution and reconciliation (Bland, Powell, & Ross, 2012; Maoz, Ward, Katz & Ross, 2002; Mnookin & Ross, 1995; Ross & Stillinger, 1991; Ross & Ward, 1995; Thompson 1991, 1998).

An interdisciplinary group of social scientists associated with The Stanford Center on International Conflict and Negotiation (SCICN) has focused on the analysis of settlement barriers and sources of bargaining inefficiency, identifying institutional, strategic, relational and psychological barriers to conflict resolution (Arrow, Mnookin, Ross, Tversky, & Wilson, 1995; Mnookin & Ross, 1995; Ross & Ward, 1995). Ethno-political conflicts, such as the long-running dispute between Israelis and Palestinians, are rife with diverse socio-psychological barriers that hinder the resolution of these seemingly intractable conflicts (Arrow et al., 1995; Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011; Maoz et al., 2002; Ross & Ward, 1995).

Socio-psychological barriers arise from cognitive, perceptual and motivational processes that govern the way human beings interpret information, evaluate risks, set priorities and experience gain and loss (Ross & Ward, 1995, p. 263). Two of these barriers

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are optimistic overconfidence – overestimating the chances of prevailing in the absence of a negotiated settlement – and loss aversion – attaching greater weight to prospective losses than to prospective gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1995; Moomkin & Ross 1995; Ross & Ward, 1995). Other barriers arise from the dynamics of the negotiation process, including the reactive devaluation effect – our tendency to devalue proposals for compromise that are seen as coming from the other side in a dispute (Maoz et al., 2002; Ross, 1995; Ross & Stillinger, 1991).

A well-documented perceptual barrier to conflict resolution is the zero-sum perception – the perception that each side can profit only to the extent that the other side loses, and that there is no possibility of an integrative agreement that would leave both sides better off (Bazerman & Neale, 1992; Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2009, 2011; Thompson, 1995).

Research also demonstrates that emotional climate and collective emotions have a crucial role in perpetuating conflict and preventing its resolution. Negative emotions, especially fear or anger, can exacerbate conflicts or prevent finding a solution, whereas positive emotions, such as hope or empathy, may help settle conflicts and promote peacemaking (Bar-Tal, 2001, 2007; Bar-Tal, Halperin, & de Rivera, 2007; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2009; Maoz, Shamir, Wolfsfeld, & Dvir, 2009).

Another major barrier to conflict resolution and reconciliation is the unwillingness to acknowledge or recognize the basic rights of the other in situations of conflict (Allan & Keller, 2006; Bar-On, 2004; Kampf, 2012; Kaufman & Bisharat, 2002; Kelman, 1987, 2007; Nagar & Maoz, under review; Rouhana, 2004; Salomon, 2004). Recognizing the rights of out-groups is especially important in asymmetric intergroup relations, where marginalized social–political groups, national groups or even states who see themselves as unjustly neglected, excluded, and discriminated against – demand recognition of their basic rights (Bauman, 2001; Emcke, 2000; Fanon, 1967; Kaufman & Bisharat, 2002). However, such recognition requires a certain amount of readiness and willingness of the publics that involves in the conflict (Nagar & Maoz, under review).

Although unwillingness to acknowledge the rights of out-groups constitutes a major barrier to the resolution of protracted asymmetric conflicts (Maoz & McCauley, 2008), this barrier has received little systematic research attention. The goal of our study is to examine psychological and ideological correlates underlying the willingness to recognize the out-group as having the right to national self-determination in the asymmetrical and protracted conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

Demands for national self-determination in asymmetric ethno-political conflicts

One of the main claims of ethnic or national minorities is for the right to national self-determination (Kaufman & Bisharat, 2002, p. 73). The right of nations to self-determination is a cardinal principle in modern international law. This principle holds that considerations of respect for equal rights and equality of opportunity require that nations have the right to freely choose their sovereignty and international political status with no external compulsion or interference (Cassese, 1995).

The first formulation of this right can be traced back to the Atlantic Charter, signed on 14 August 1941 by Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, and Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (Cassese, 1995; United States, 1941). Clause 3 of the Atlantic Charter that reads: “Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them” (United States, 1941). When the UN Charter was formulated in the wake of the
Second World War, self-determination was explicitly mentioned in articles 1 and 55 of this Charter (Cassese, 1995; United Nations, 1945).

The right to self-determination was subsequently underscored in several UN resolutions, among them Resolution 637 of 16 December 1952, where the right of people and nations to self-determination was considered “a prerequisite to the full enjoyment of all fundamental human rights” (Dweik, 1997; United Nations, 1952). Later, the General Assembly compiled all previous resolutions dealing with this topic into a single one – Resolution 2625 of October 1970, stating that: “all peoples have the right freely to determine, without external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development, and every State has the duty to respect this right …”. This resolution was approved unanimously on 24 November 1971 (Dweik, 1997; United Nations, 1970).

Against this background, struggles for national self-determination have become dominant since the end of the Cold War, when numerous national subminorities demanded to be recognized as separate national entities (Freeman, 1998). These struggles have not disappeared in the post-modern era (Freeman, 1998; Margalit & Raz, 1990) and are especially relevant in asymmetric conflicts, where disadvantaged national groups are dependent on state elites to recognize them as a political entity (Kaufman & Bisharat, 2002).

Demands for recognition of the right to national self-determination are also central in the long-running asymmetric conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. When the UN passed resolution 181 of November 1947, calling for the partition of Palestine, it recognized the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, as the partition plan allowed for the establishment of an Arab Palestinian state (Dweik, 1997; United Nations, 1947). Based on this resolution, Palestinians claim that the Israeli occupation has deprived the people of Palestine of the universal right to determine their future, political status and independence, resulting in injury to Palestinian dignity, justice, progress and equity (Dweik, 1997; see also, for example, claims made regarding the Palestinian situation in the discussions of the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee, in November 2013, on self-determination). Israel, on the other hand, calls upon Palestine to recognize Israel as a Jewish state – a demand generally rejected by Palestinian leadership (Nagar & Shamir, 2013) – and claims that finding the way to create two States living next to each other has to be reached by the two parties through negotiations and cannot be treated as a perquisite (see, for example, the claims made by the Israeli representative in the discussions of the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee, in November 2013, on self-determination).

In sum, it is evident that difficulties in acknowledging the out-group’s right to national self-determination constitute a crucial barrier to conflict resolution and reconciliation in the protracted and asymmetric conflict between Israelis and Palestinians (Allan & Keller, 2006; Bar-On, 2004; Kampf, 2012; Kaufman & Bisharat, 2002; Kelman, 1987, 2007; Nagar & Shamir, 2013; Rouhana, 2004; Salomon, 2004). Our study aims to systematically examine the psychological and ideological elements underlying this unwillingness to recognize the out-group’s right for national self-determination in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

More specifically, we examine, using public opinion polling data, the extent to which Jewish-Israeli attitudes towards recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination can be explained by two major psychological constructs that have been found, in previous research, to play a central role in Jewish Israeli attitudes regarding the

In addition, given the importance of Hawkish, right-wing ideology as a major predictor of attitudes in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Maoz & McCauley, 2005; Nagar & Maoz, under review; Shamir & Shamir, 2000), our study also explores the extent to which the degree of Hawkishness of Jewish-Israeli respondents predicts, together with and beyond threat perception and dehumanization, attitudes towards recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination.

**Threat, dehumanization and recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination**

Maoz and McCauley (2008) have developed the threat and dehumanization two-factor model to explain support of aggressive acts towards the out-group in asymmetric conflict.

Threat perception is commonly defined in the literature of intergroup conflict as the perception of realistic threat to one’s own group or state posed by another group or state. Conditions of out-group threat increase the tendency to be politically intolerant (Gibson, 1992; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, & Wood, 1995; Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter, 2006). In addition, the tendency to support punitive and aggressive measures under conditions of out-group threat is well documented (Arian, 1989; Hermann, Tetlock, & Visser, 1999). The perceived threat of future terrorism has also been found to be associated with support for aggressive actions against vulnerable out-groups (Huddy, Feldman, Taber, & Lahav, 2005; Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004) and to decreased support for more moderate and compromising policies (Bar-Tal, 2001; Gordon & Arian, 2001).

Dehumanized others are often perceived as morally inferior to one’s own group and are placed outside the boundary within which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply (Opotow, 1990, p. 1). Moral exclusion is especially prominent in asymmetric and intractable conflicts, such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Bar-Tal, Rosen, & Nets-Zehngut, 2009). Those who are morally excluded are perceived as nonentities, expendable, undeserving, exploitable, and irrelevant (Opotow, 1990; Opotow, Gerson, & Woodside, 2005). Moral exclusion justifies and rationalizes causing or allowing harm to the dehumanized out-group. Therefore, out-group dehumanization is a major facilitator of extreme interethnic violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide (Chirot & McCauley, 2006; Kelman, 1976; Staub, 1989, 2000). Out-group dehumanization is clearly related to increased tendency to aggress against the dehumanized other, especially in asymmetric ethnic or national conflicts (Kelman, 2005).

In a series of studies, Maoz and McCauley demonstrated that Jewish-Israeli perception of threat from Palestinians and dehumanization of Palestinians predict the tendency to be politically intolerant toward Palestinians and to show lower willingness to take into consideration Palestinian rights and demands (Maoz & McCauley, 2008; see also Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2009, 2011 and Maoz & Eidelson, 2007, for additional findings consistent with this model). A recent study of Jewish-Israeli polling data has found that threat and distrust towards Palestinians and dehumanization of Palestinians also predict lower Jewish-Israeli willingness to recognize Palestinian pain and suffering (Nagar & Maoz, under review).

These previous demonstrations of the contribution of the two-factor model to predicting attitudes towards the out-group in asymmetric conflict lead us to expect that: *Threat perception and dehumanization will predict Jewish-Israeli recognition of the*
Palestinian right to national self-determination, with higher threat perception and higher dehumanization predicting lower recognition.

**Hawkishness and recognition of the Palestinian right for national self-determination**

A central ideological orientation in conflicts in general and specifically in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – predicting lower support for peaceful resolution and for conceding to demands – is a right-wing–hawkish orientation. Hawkish positions tend to be less cooperative and trusting when the resolution of a conflict is on the agenda (Maoz, 2006; Maoz et al., 2002).

Previous studies have found that higher Jewish-Israeli hawkishness is associated with lower willingness to support compromise solutions that also take into account the needs, aspirations and rights of Palestinians (Maoz, 1999; Maoz & McCauley, 2005; Maoz, Yaniv, & Ivri, 2007; Shamir & Shamir, 2000; Shamir & Shikaki, 2002). Hawkishness was also found to be strongly positively related to Jewish-Israeli support of Palestinian population transfer, as well as to support for violating basic Palestinian human rights (Maoz & Eidelson, 2007) and to lower willingness to recognize Palestinian pain and suffering (Nagar & Maoz, under review).

Moreover, in a series of studies, Maoz and McCauley have demonstrated that hawkishness explains negative policy preferences and attitudes in asymmetric conflict alongside and beyond psychological predictors (Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2008).

This review leads us to expect that: **Hawkishness will make an additional contribution to predicting Jewish-Israeli recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination with higher hawkishness predicting decreased recognition.**

In sum, the primary goal of our study is to examine the factors that are associated with Jewish-Israeli willingness to acknowledge the Palestinian right to national self-determination, and more specifically, to examine the extent to which: (1) threat perception and dehumanization predict Jewish-Israeli willingness to recognize the Palestinian right to national self-determination, and (2) hawkishness predicts Jewish-Israeli willingness to recognize the Palestinian right to national self-determination.

**Hypotheses**

1. Threat perception and dehumanization will predict Jewish-Israeli willingness to recognize the Palestinian right to national self-determination, with higher threat perception and higher dehumanization predicting lower recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination.

2. Hawkishness will make an additional contribution to predicting Jewish-Israeli willingness to recognize the Palestinian right to national self-determination when added to perception of threat and dehumanization as a third predictor, with higher hawkishness predicting lower recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination.

**Methods**

**Survey design and participants**

Results are based on a nationally representative randomly-sampled interview survey of 507 Jewish-Israeli adults (age 18 and older) conducted by the Midgam Research Institute, a professional polling agency in Israel, during December 2013. The response rate in
surveys of the Jewish-Israeli population, including this one, is estimated at between 20% and 30%. The survey was conducted in Hebrew, but items are reproduced here in English translation. The demographics of this sample were comparable to those of the general Israeli-Jewish population.

**Measures**

Here we describe briefly the measures used in our analysis (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations of the measures and the intercorrelations among them). See Maoz and McCauley (2008) for previous analyses based on the threat and dehumanization scales (see also Maoz & McCauley, 2009, 2011, and Nagar & Maoz, under review).

The recognition of Palestinian right to national self-determination scale was based on two items rated on a six-point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree. Responses to these items were averaged for each respondent to create the scale, where higher scores mean higher willingness to recognize the Palestinian right for national self-determination. The formulation of these items is based on prevalent phrasing regarding Israeli recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination as it appears in Israeli political discourse, as well as in both official and off-the-record negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians over the years (Nagar & Shamir, 2013). These items were: “Recognition by Israel of the Palestinian right to national self-determination is an important as part of efforts to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict” and “I think that as part of the attempts to resolve the conflict, Israel should recognize the Palestinian right to national self-determination”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for these items was .77.

The threat perception scale was based on three items rated on a six-point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree. Responses to these items were averaged for each respondent to create the scale, where higher scores mean higher perception of threat from Palestinians. The three items were: “In my opinion, the majority of Palestinians would have destroyed the State of Israel if they could”; “It is possible to trust Palestinians (reversed)”; and “One can think of a future in which both Israelis and

| Table 1. Means (SDs) and intercorrelations of recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination scale, threat perception scale, dehumanization scale, hawkishness and demographic items |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                 | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | Mean (SD) |
| 1. Recognition of Palestinian right to national self-determination scale (2) | .77 | .62 | .36 | .54 | .05 | .13 | 3.7 (1.4) |
| 2. Threat perception scale (3) | .73 | .42 | .59 | .08 | .17 | 4.0 (1.2) |
| 3. Dehumanization scale (2) | .87 | .32 | .14 | .12 | 2.6 (1.4) |
| 4. Hawkishness | | | | | | | |
| 5. Level of education | .07 | 14.8 (3.8) |
| 6. SES | | | | | | 2.8 (1.3) |

*Note: N = 436–507, correlations in bold are p < .01 (2-tailed). Number of items for each scale appear in parentheses. Figures in italics on diagonal are Cronbach alphas of the corresponding scales. Recognition of Palestinian right to self-determination scale was on a 6-point scale that ranged from *not at all* to *very much*. Threat perception scale and Dehumanization scale were on a 1–6 scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Hawkishness was on a 9-point bipolar scale ranging from *Dove to Hawk*. Level of education was on a continuous scale of the number of years of formal schooling. SES (socioeconomic status) was on a 5-point scale ranging from *a lot below the average* to *a lot above the average.*
Palestinians will gain from cooperation between them (reversed)”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for these items was .73.

The dehumanization scale was based on two items rated on a six-point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree. Responses to these items were averaged for each respondent to create the scale, where higher scores mean higher dehumanization of Palestinians. The two items were: “I feel disgust towards Palestinians” and “I feel contempt towards Palestinians”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for these items was .87.

Hawkishness was measured by asking respondents to place themselves on a 9-point bipolar “Hawk–Dove” scale as follows: “In the scale presented to you, ‘1’ represents full identification with left-wing (dovish) attitudes, ‘9’ represents full identification with right-wing (hawkish) attitudes, and ‘5’ represents middle/centrist attitudes towards Arab–Israeli relations. Where would you place yourself on this scale?”

Level of Education was measured by asking respondents to indicate their number of years of formal schooling.

Socioeconomic status (SES) was measured by asking respondents to rate their household average monthly expenditure on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) a lot below the average to (5) a lot above the average.

Results

Descriptive analysis

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations of our measures as well as the zero-order correlations among them. These data indicate that Jewish-Israelis expressed high threat perception from Palestinians ($M = 4.0, SD = 1.2$), with 56% of our respondents indicating that they feel threatened by Palestinians (ratings of 4, 5 or 6 on the 1–6 scale). Jewish-Israelis respondents indicated medium levels of dehumanization of Palestinians ($M = 2.6, SD = 1.4$) with 19% of our respondents indicating dehumanization of Palestinians (ratings of 4, 5 or 6 on the 1–6 scale). Table 1 also indicates that Jewish-Israelis expressed medium-level willingness to recognize the Palestinian right to national self-determination ($M = 3.7, SD = 1.4$), with 49% of our Jewish-Israeli respondents expressing willingness to recognize the Palestinian right to national self-determination (ratings of 4, 5 or 6 on the 1–6 scale). In addition, Jewish-Israelis expressed medium-level Hawkishness ($M = 6.01, SD = 2.26$), with 49% of our respondents identifying themselves as hawks (ratings of 6–9 on the 1–9 scale), 18% identifying themselves as doves and 27% as centrists.

Threat perception and dehumanization as predictors of recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination

Recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination scale showed strong zero-order correlations with the threat perception scale ($r = −.62; p < .001, N = 442$; see Table 1) and with the dehumanization scale ($r = −.36, p < .001, N = 452$). The threat perception scale was also correlated with the dehumanization scale ($r = .42, p < .001, N = 456$; Table 1).

Our first hypothesis was that perception of threat and dehumanization would predict Jewish-Israeli recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a regression model using the threat perception scale and the dehumanization scale to predict respondents’ scores on the recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination scale (Model 1, see Table 2). The regression model produced a statistically significant (adjusted) $R^2 = .40 \ [F(2, 427) = 142.4, p < .001]$. 
The resulting regression coefficients indicate that as hypothesized, the threat perception scale made a significant contribution to the overall explanatory power of the model ($beta = - .57, p < .001$). In addition, as expected, the dehumanization scale had a significant effect on the recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination scale ($beta = - .13, p < .001$). Respondents with higher scores on the threat perception scale and the dehumanization scale showed decreased willingness to recognize Palestinian right to national self-determination (see Table 2, Model 1).

**Hawkishness as predictor of recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination**

Our second hypothesis was that hawkishness would make an additional contribution to predicting Jewish-Israeli recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a regression model using hawkishness alongside the threat perception scale and the dehumanization scale to predict respondents’ scores on the recognition of Palestinian right to national self-determination scale (Model 2, see Table 2). Adding the level of respondents’ hawkishness in the second step of our regression produced a significant increase in (adjusted) $R^2$ from $.40$ to $.44$ [$F$ change $(3,407) = 106.37, p < .001$]. The resulting regression coefficients indicate that as hypothesized, hawkishness made an additional contribution to the overall explanatory power of the model ($beta = - .23, p < .001$). As hypothesized, respondents with higher scores on hawkishness showed decreased willingness to recognize the Palestinian right to national self-determination (see Table 2, Model 2).

**Predicting beyond hawkishness and demographic variables**

Our findings also indicate that threat perception ($beta = - .43, p < .001$) and dehumanization of Palestinians ($beta = - .14, p = .002$) still have significant effects on the recognition of Palestinian right to national self-determination scale, when hawkishness, level of education and SES are taken in consideration (see Table 2, Model 3). The demographic variables: level of education ($beta = - .05, p = .23$) and SES ($beta = 02, p = .64$) of respondents were not significantly associated with the recognition of Palestinian right to national self-determination scale. It is worth noting that gender also was not significantly correlated with the recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination scale ($r = - .01; p = .79$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat perception scale</td>
<td>$- .57$</td>
<td>$- .44$</td>
<td>$- .43$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehumanization scale</td>
<td>$- .13$</td>
<td>$- .11$</td>
<td>$- .14$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkishness</td>
<td></td>
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<td>$- .21$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
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<td>$- .05$</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>$.40$</td>
<td>$.44$</td>
<td>$.42$</td>
</tr>
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*Note: Coefficients in bold are $p < .01$.*
Discussion
Our study was designed to explore psychological and ideological factors that underlie an important barrier to the resolution of asymmetrical conflict: unwillingness to acknowledge the right of the opponents to national self-determination. It joins the other work in this volume (Bachar & Weiner; Bland; Holloway & Lei; Powell; Ross) in presenting a contextualized approach to barriers that elaborates on power asymmetry and on related issues of relationship and identity dynamics.

Analysis of polling data from a representative sample of Israeli Jews indicates that, in line with our expectations, threat perception and dehumanization of Palestinians had a significant contribution to predicting decreased Jewish-Israeli recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination. Also in line with our expectations, hawkishness has an additional contribution to predicting decreased Jewish-Israeli recognition when added alongside threat perception and dehumanization as a third predictor.

Non-recognition of rights as a barrier in asymmetric conflicts
In the past several decades, the “barriers” approach to conflict resolution has become a major analytical tool for understanding conflicts and their resolution (Bland et al., 2012; Maoz et al., 2002; Mnookin & Ross, 1995; Ross & Stillinger, 1991; Ross & Ward, 1995; Thompson, 1991, 1998). Continuing and expanding on this important work, our research empirically examines psychological factors underlying a major issue in asymmetric relations: the willingness to recognize the needs and rights of the less powerful out-group. Considering (non-)recognition of the right of the out-group to national self-determination as a barrier to conflict resolution broadens the conversation about barriers and makes an addition to urgent considerations that are increasingly seen as relevant to understanding conflicts spanning identity, relationships, morality, and power asymmetry (Abu-Nimer, 1999, 2004; Bar-On, 2004; Bar-Tal, 2001; Bekerman, 2002; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011; Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004; Hammack, 2006, 2008, 2009; Kelman, 1987, 1992, 2007; Ron & Maoz, 2013; Ron, Maoz, & Bekerman, 2010; Rosenberg & Maoz, 2012; Rouhana, 2004).

In the specific context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, acknowledgment of each other’s right to national self-determination could have the power to create a historical momentum for reconciliation (Kelman, 1992, p. 27). Therefore, the unwillingness of many Israelis to recognize the Palestinian right to national self-determination is a powerful barrier, which fuels and maintains the conflict. Previous studies have emphasized the important role of public opinion in conflicts: it underlies collective wisdom, influences government decisions and lends legitimacy to leaders and policies alike (Nadeau, Neimi, & Amato, 1994; Noelle-Neumann, 1993; Putnam, 1988; Shamir & Shamir, 2000; Shamir & Shikaki, 2010). Our study aims to contribute to the theoretical and practical understanding of the unwillingness to acknowledge the Palestinian right to national self-determination as a barrier to the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by shedding light on the dynamics of Jewish-Israeli public opinion that underlies it.

Understanding recognition of out-group rights
Few previous studies have attempted to examine what recognition of the needs and rights of the out-group actually means for those who are involved in asymmetric protracted conflicts (Kampf, 2012; Nagar & Maoz, under review; Nagar & Shamir, 2013). In a study
based on qualitative discourse analysis of Israeli officials’ statements, Kampf (2012) identified three phases of recognition in conflicts: (a) acknowledging the existence of the other as a political entity; (b) acknowledging the other’s pain and suffering; and (c) acknowledging one’s own responsibility for the suffering of the other. In another study, based on quantitative analysis of public opinion polls, Nagar and Shamir (2013) examined the importance that the Israeli public attaches to demands for recognition. Their study demonstrated that Jewish-Israeli respondents unambiguously placed Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people as their top priority. Nagar and Maoz (under review) found in a previous analysis of another set of Jewish-Israeli polling data that dehumanization of Palestinians and threat and distrust towards Palestinians predict Jewish-Israeli lower willingness to recognize Palestinian pain and suffering. Our study takes another step toward understanding the role of recognition of the rights of the out-group in conflict and conflict resolution through examining the psychological and ideological factors that underlie public opinion willingness to acknowledge the right of the less powerful out-group to national self-determination.

**Threat perception and dehumanization as predictors of recognition of Palestinian right to national self-determination**

Maoz and McCauley (2008) have developed the threat and dehumanization two-factor model to explain public support for aggressive acts towards the out-group in asymmetric conflict, acts that violate human rights of the out-group and hinder the resolution of the conflict. Other findings have been consistent with this model (Maoz & Eidelson, 2007; Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2006, 2011; Nagar & Maoz, under review). The current study extends the two-factor model by demonstrating its ability to predict an important barrier to the resolution of asymmetric conflicts: the unwillingness to recognize the right of less-powerful out-groups to national self-determination.

Negative attitudes towards the out-group such as threat and dehumanization may be also associated with an “entity theory” – the general belief that groups have inherent and unchangeable qualities (Levy, Chiu, & Hong, 2006; Levy, Stroessner, & Dweck, 1998; Rydell, Kurt, Devin, & Mackie, 2007). Previous studies have found that when people believe in the malleability of out-group characteristics – in the capacity groups to change their tendencies – they express more positive attitudes toward out-group members, more willingness to interact with them, and show higher support for conflict resolution based on compromise (Halperin, Russell, Dweck, & Gross, 2011; Halperin et al., 2012; Levontin, Halperin, & Dweck, 2013). Specifically, in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Halperin, Russell, Trzesniewski, Gross and Dweck (2011; see also Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, & Gross, 2014; Levontin et al., 2013) have demonstrated in an impressive series of studies the benefits of promoting beliefs about group malleability. Their findings showed that Jewish-Israelis’ beliefs that groups were malleable predicted more positive attitudes toward Palestinians and higher willingness to compromise. Further research may shed light on the extent to which beliefs about the malleable versus fixed nature of out-groups affects threat, dehumanization and the willingness to acknowledge the rights of the out-group to national self-determination in asymmetric conflict.

**Limitations of the study and directions for future research**

Despite the clarity of our results, this study has certain limitations. First, our correlational data cannot be seen as demonstrating a cause and effect relationship. In our regression
analysis we have identified one measure (recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination) as our dependent variable and the other two measures (threat perception from Palestinians and dehumanization of Palestinians) as the independent variables or predictors, thus implying a causal interpretation. At most we can say that our results are consistent with a causal model in which perceived threat, dehumanization, and hawkish political commitment determine willingness to recognize Palestinians as a nation. Future studies using experimental paradigms to manipulate perceived threat or dehumanization might further establish the effect of these factors on willingness to recognize the right of out-groups to national self-determination.

Second, while our study focused on the unwillingness of Israeli Jews to recognize Palestinian rights to self-determination, it is important to note that also Palestinians have difficulties regarding their recognition of the State of Israel. While generally, Palestinian leadership is willing to recognize the state of Israel as the national home of its respective peoples, it rejects Jewish-Israeli demands for Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people (Nagar & Shamir, 2013). Future research should thus examine predictors of Palestinian attitudes towards the right of Jewish Israelis to national self-determination in a Jewish state.

Future research should also explore attitudes towards the right to national self-determination in other cases of asymmetric ethno-national conflict, such as the conflict of Armenians and Azeris over Nagorno-Karabagh, or the conflict of Sunni and Shi’a in Bahrain. Unwillingness to accept the right of cultural minorities to national self-determination is a prevalent phenomenon in a globalizing world, and we are only at the beginning of understanding the factors that underlie it.

Conclusion

In exploring factors that explain the readiness to acknowledge the right to national self-determination of the opponent in an asymmetric ethno-political conflict, this study adds to and expands the important body of research on barriers to conflict resolution (Bland et al., 2012; Mnookin & Ross 1995; Ross & Stillinger, 1991; Ross & Ward, 1995; Thompson, 1991, 1998). It joins other work presented in this volume (Bachar & Weiner; Bland; Holloway & Lei; Powell; Ross) in presenting a contextualized approach to barriers that elaborates on power asymmetry and on relationship and identity dynamics within settings of asymmetric conflicts.

Moreover, our study importantly extends the threat perception and dehumanization two-factor model (Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2011) by demonstrating its ability to predict a powerful barrier to the resolution of asymmetric conflict – unwillingness to recognize the right of the weaker out-group to national self-determination.

Further research should explore factors that determine recognition of the rights of out-groups in other asymmetric conflicts, in order to continue theoretically and practically charting this important barrier to conflict resolution and what it takes to overcome it.

References


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