

Explaining public support for violence against politicians during conflict: Evidence from a panel study in Israel

Journal of Peace Research
2021, Vol. 58(3) 417–432
© The Author(s) 2020
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/0022343320905355
journals.sagepub.com/home/jpr



Julia Elad-Strenger

Department of Political Studies, Bar-Ilan University

Stevan E Hobfoll

STAR – Stress, Anxiety and Resilience Consultants

Brian J Hall

Department of Psychology, University of Macau

Daphna Canetti

School of Political Sciences, University of Haifa

Abstract

What drives citizens' support for violence against domestic political actors? Despite its potentially devastating consequences, there is surprisingly little research on the antecedents of this unique form of political violence. Building upon recent insights on the psychological implications of exposure to conflict on support for political violence, we examined the motivations underlying public support for violence against politicians in the context of protracted conflict. Using a two-wave panel design among Jewish-Israelis, we examined the interactive effects of conflict-induced perceived threat, psychological distress, and political orientation on support for violence against politicians. Consistent with previous findings on the psychological implications of conflict, our findings suggest that conflict-induced threat perceptions play an important role in predicting support for violence against politicians. Nevertheless, our findings point to important boundary conditions to these effects: the *strength* of the relationship between perceived threat and attitudes towards political violence is qualified by the level of chronic conflict-related psychological distress, and the *direction* of the effects of perceived threat is qualified by individuals' self-placement on the left-right continuum. More specifically, we found that perceived threat *increased* rightists' support and *decreases* leftists' support for violence against politicians, only under high, but not low, conflict-related psychological distress. The main conclusion of this study is that support for violence against politicians can be seen as an ideology-driven protective strategy against the negative psychological implications of exposure to violent conflict. By pointing to the importance of understanding the interactive role of psychological and political factors in determining public support for such acts, our findings therefore contribute to the understanding of a relatively understudied phenomenon with potentially catastrophic effects on political stability.

Keywords

intergroup conflict, perceived threat, political ideology, political violence, psychological distress

Throughout history, the deliberate use or threat of violence against politicians by citizens of the nations they represent has been a persistent feature of the political landscape, often bearing substantial and even long-lasting effects on political and societal realities. Numerous historian accounts argue that the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in 1914 eventually lead to the eruption of World War I (Keegan, 2014). Similar associations were made between the assassination

of John F Kennedy and the subsequent escalation of the Vietnam War (Jones, 2003), and between the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin in 1995 and the consequent collapse of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians (Rapoport & Weinberg,

Corresponding author:

eladstj@biu.ac.il

2013). Although the direct consequences of such assaults against political figures on specific historical turning points are largely hypothetical, their effects on the societies involved, particularly their morale and sense of political stability, are undeniable (Iqbal & Zorn, 2008).

To this day, verbal threats and physical assaults against politicians are considered legitimate pathways of political expression and goal-attainment for some citizens, even in highly stable Western democracies (Kalmoe, 2010). Despite its potentially devastating effects, this phenomenon has received relatively little scientific attention, particularly compared to other forms of political violence such as direct and indirect aggression towards out-groups (see Ben Shitrit, Elad-Strenger & Hirsch-Hoefler, 2017) and terrorism against ordinary civilians. Although considered a form of political violence, citizens' aggression towards politicians has several unique features. First, it targets individuals rather than groups. Second, it is carried out against domestic targets rather than national out-group members. Finally, it targets official representatives of the national in-group rather than ordinary civilians. This form of political violence can therefore be considered a subtype of domestic terrorism (Berkebile, 2017; Griset & Mahan, 2003) which, unlike other forms of political violence and violent protest, specifically targets individuals who hold official political positions (even if the perpetrator's objective is to intimidate a large audience beyond that of the immediate victim).

Rather than focusing on the factors that mobilize citizens to engage in these forms of domestic terrorism as a means to achieve political goals, this study focuses on the factors underlying justification and legitimization for such acts in the context of ongoing conflict. Clearly, the magnitude of support for violence against formal representatives of one's nation may not match the magnitude of support for violence against national out-groups. Nevertheless, public legitimization of such acts may have dramatic effects on society, as support for violence against public figures reflects delegitimization and mistrust of the nation's institutions (Pedahzur, Hasisi & Brichta, 2000), and lack of faith in the rules of democracy (Yuchtman-Yaar & Hermann, 1998). Furthermore, even when most citizens refrain from violence, citizens with less restraint may be encouraged to act in an atmosphere that accepts such violence (Kalmoe, 2014). The justification of such acts may thus in itself threaten political stability. The present research integrates contextual, psychological, and political variables to examine the motivations underlying citizens' support for violence

against politicians as a specific form of political violence during ongoing violent conflict.

Past political-psychological research has identified threat perceptions as one of the strongest predictors of public support for political violence, particularly against national out-groups and ethnic minorities, in the context of ongoing conflict (e.g. Canetti et al., 2015, 2018; Canetti-Nisim et al., 2009; Huddy, Feldman & Weber, 2007). Although much is known about the effects of threat perception on support for violence against national outsiders, much less is known about the conditions in which such threat perceptions trigger support for violence against formal representatives of the national in-group.

We identify two factors which may play a key role in determining the extent to which citizens support (or reject) violence against politicians to defend the social order against threat. The first is citizens' core values, motivations, and orientations, as they are reflected in their self-identification as leftists or rightists. We build on previous research on the association between political orientation and responses to perceived threat on the one hand (e.g. Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Greenberg, Solomon & Pyszczynski, 1997), and between political orientation and relation to in-group authorities on the other (Kugler, Jost & Noorbaloochi, 2014), to examine the effects of perceived threat on support for this unique form of political violence.

Second, we hypothesize that the extent to which perceived threat affects citizens' support for such an extreme form of political violence is influenced by the more 'chronic' psychological implications of conflict exposure. Indeed, research suggests that *chronic* psychological distress resulting from exposure to prolonged conflict facilitates and exacerbates the experience of *acute* threat perceptions and the extent to which they trigger aggressive responses (e.g. Canetti et al., 2015; Canetti-Nissim et al., 2009). Based on this literature, this study examines whether (and how) the acute and chronic psychological implications of exposure to prolonged conflict interact with citizens' ideological self-identification to predict support for violence against politicians, as a unique form of political violence.

Political orientation and the nature of responses to threat perceptions

Research on threat perceptions in the context of prolonged conflict suggests that supporting violence against the source of threat is seen by many citizens as the most effective way to minimize current and potential risks and

to restore their personal sense of safety (Browne & Hoyt, 2000; Canetti-Nissim et al., 2009; Huddy et al., 2002). Although such confrontational defense strategies against perceived threat can further compromise citizens' safety and contribute to the escalation of violent conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013), they are often seen as effective means to weaken or eliminate the threatening agent, and thus offer hope for a durable resolution of the threat-inducing conflict (Hirschberger & Pyszczynski, 2011). Indeed, at times when social order and public security are under threat, policies that infringe on civil liberties in pursuit of enhanced security become more attractive to policymakers and ordinary citizens alike (Jenkins-Smith & Herron, 2009).

Research suggests, however, that individuals' sensitivity to threatening situations, and the extent to which they resort to violent defenses against them, depends at least in part on their left–right political orientation (e.g. Adorno, 1950; Jost et al., 2003). Although some scholarship questions the strength of this argument (e.g. Elad-Strenger, Proch & Kessler, 2019; Feldman & Huddy, 2014; Proch, Elad-Strenger & Kessler, 2018), research has provided empirical evidence for consistent differences between political leftists and rightists in threat sensitivity, threat regulation, and threat responses.

Threat perceptions and the 'conservative shift' hypothesis

According to the view of conservatism as 'motivated social cognition', which is akin to what Tetlock (1989) has referred to as the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis, political rightists (who also typically demonstrate stronger authoritarian tendencies; e.g. Jost et al., 2003) demonstrate relatively greater 'chronic' intolerance for ambiguity, uncertainty, and threat (e.g. Jost et al., 2003; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996), whereas leftists typically demonstrate greater cognitive flexibility and tolerance for ambiguous and threatening situations (Carney et al., 2008; Hibbing, Smith & Alford, 2014).

According to this line of research, rightists' higher threat-sensitivity is reflected in their desire to reinforce existing moral boundaries created by traditions, hierarchies, and social structures. Indeed, studies suggest that rightists tend to place higher value than leftists on order, security, group cohesiveness, and social stability, all of which are aimed at reinforcing socio-moral boundaries and reducing uncertainty (e.g. Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009). This is also reflected in rightists' tendency to prefer the normative balance to be weighted toward security rather than toward individual liberties and freedoms (Jenkins-Smith & Herron, 2009). Leftists, on the other

hand, tend to prioritize values associated with the protection and fair treatment of individuals over those that emphasize the welfare and survival of larger groups and institutions (Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009; Shamir & Arian, 1994). Insofar as rightists are 'chronically' more motivated to reduce and eliminate threats to the social order, and insofar as violence against the threat-inducing agent offers the hope of eliminating threat-induced uncertainty, rightists are more likely than leftists to justify harming individuals to preserve and protect the collective from threat (e.g. Federico & Schneider, 2007).

According to this line of research, however, the association between conservatism and threat sensitivity is both 'chronic' and temporarily activated. Therefore, to the extent that political conservatism or right-wing ideology is motivated by the avoidance of threat and uncertainty, threat-inducing situations will induce a conservative shift also among citizens who under non-threatening conditions identify with values associated with the political left (or with non-authoritarians). According to this 'conservative shift' hypothesis (Jost et al., 2003), citizens tend to undergo a shift towards political conservatism under conditions of uncertainty and threat, since the core conservative values of authority, stability, and order naturally provide a comforting anchor. Importantly, however, most of the studies supporting this hypothesis suggest that the increase in support for aggressive defenses of the social order is more pronounced among leftists, supposedly because rightists already support such policies (e.g. Bonanno & Jost, 2006; Hetherington & Suhay, 2011). To summarize, findings consistent with the conservative shift hypothesis suggest that perceived threat increases, rather than decreases, support for violent means to protect the social order, and that this increase is more pronounced among political leftists. If extended to support for violence against politicians, left-leaning citizens should increase their support for violence against politicians under threat, more than rightists.

Threat perceptions and the 'value reinforcement' hypothesis

Contrary to the view of conservatism as 'motivated social cognition', another line of research claims that leftist and rightist ideologies are equally suited to fulfill needs associated with threat and uncertainty. Rather than shifting citizens' views to the political right, or making them more violent defenders of their values, threat perceptions reinforce their adherence to their ideological beliefs and in-group norms, since increased conviction in one's

pre-existing worldview reduces existential anxiety (Greenberg, Solomon & Pyszczynski, 1997; see also Elad-Strenger, 2013, 2016; Elad-Strenger & Shahar, 2017), helps restore a sense of personal control (Fritsche, Jonas & Fankhänel, 2008), and distracts individuals from the threatening state (McGregor et al., 2010). This framework therefore suggests that perceived threat increases citizens' adherence to the norms, values, and ideals prescribed by their political in-group.

According to this 'value reinforcement' hypothesis, the differences in value priorities between leftists and rightists are further intensified under threatening conditions, such that rightists become even more concerned about maintaining the *collective's* well-being under threat, whereas leftists become even more concerned about protecting the freedoms and well-being of *individuals* within the collective (e.g. Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005). These predictions therefore diverge from the predictions put forth by the view of conservatism as 'motivated social cognition' and the conservative shift hypothesis, in that they consider the possibility that threat perceptions may decrease, rather than increase, violent defenses of the social order. Importantly, this line of research suggests that the direction of change in support for aggressive responses to threat depend on citizens' political orientation: insofar as threat perceptions make individuals more rigid defenders of their own value systems, it predicts that rightists will increase their support for the use of violent means to restore their sense of safety under threat, whereas leftists will reject them ever more strongly under threat. If extended to support for violence against politicians, citizens who identify with the political right will increase, whereas those identified with the political left will decrease, support for violence against politicians under threat.

Perceptions of in-group authority and support for violence against politicians

According to the political-psychological research reviewed above, considering the motivations and value-orientations prescribed by citizens' ideological dispositions can shed light on the extent to which citizens will support, or reject, the use of political violence to restore their sense of safety under conflict-induced threat. This body of research has thus far, however, focused primarily on violence against ethnic minorities and national out-groups. To explore the interactive effects of conflict-induced threat perceptions and ideology on the justification of aggression towards domestic targets, and

particularly authority figures, more specific motivations and orientations should be considered, taking into account the unique characteristics of this specific form of political violence. In particular, we should consider citizens' attitudes and orientations towards cultural and political authorities and hierarchies, as well as their attitudes towards authorities' role in preserving the social order and their legitimacy in times of threat, as support for violence against them may leave some citizens torn between their deference to authority and their in-group loyalties.

According to past research, rightists' relative tendency to perceive the world as dangerous and threatening, and their emphasis on protecting the social order from such threats, also reflect in their tendency to be more respectful and protective of national in-group authorities than leftists (Braithwaite, 1998; Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009; Jost et al., 2003). According to this reasoning, rightists' respect for authority should prevent them from turning their aggression towards official representatives of their national in-group under threat, consistent with numerous studies supporting the conservative shift hypothesis. If the value reinforcement hypothesis is correct, however, and perceived threat increases adherence to existing values, rightists may in fact decrease their support for violence against politicians under threat, since threat reinforces their respect and protectiveness of in-group authorities, and since violence against them may further compromise the stability of the social order they 'chronically' tend to protect.

The assumption that rightists hold authorities in high esteem and are highly concerned with the preservation of the social order may also lead, however, to the opposite hypothesis: they may in fact become *more* likely to punish political leaders for violations against the national in-group, as these leaders are the very entities who are entrusted with the protection of the nation against threat and with the role of maintaining the stability of the social order. For authoritarians, citizens' obedience to authorities should be met with the authorities' absolute commitment to guard the social order (e.g. Henderson, 1991). Once authority figures are believed to have violated this mutual contract by endangering or failing to protect the social order, authoritarians no longer perceive them as legitimate authorities that deserve citizens' obedience (e.g. Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). This may particularly be true when these authority figures are national in-group members. Although authoritarians are more likely to hold out-groups, rather than in-group members, responsible for instability and threat (Skitka, McMurray & Burroughs, 1991), they also value in-group loyalty

more than non-authoritarians (Kugler, Jost & Noorbaloohi, 2014), and may therefore render such ‘betrayal’ of an in-group leader particularly unacceptable. According to this logic, rightists will increase their support for violence against politicians under threat.

Integrating the foregoing discussion, we will examine two sets of alternative hypotheses:

H1: Citizens who identify with the political right:

(H1a) will increase their support for violence against politicians under threat.

(H1b) will decrease their support for violence against politicians under threat.

H2: Citizens who identify with the political left:

(H2a) will increase their support for violence against politicians under threat.

(H2b) will decrease their support for violence against politicians under threat.

These hypotheses, which have thus far not been examined empirically, offer an intriguing explanation of how citizens’ chronic psychological implications of exposure to violent conflict interact with temporarily activated threat perceptions and citizens’ political orientation to shape public support for violence against politicians, as a means to protect the social order from threat.

Psychological distress and threat responses

Exposure to threat-inducing events as part of prolonged, violent conflict was found to contribute to the development of chronic psychological distress among citizens involved, whether they are directly (e.g. Elad-Strenger et al., 2013; Hirsch-Hoefler et al., 2014) or indirectly (Canetti-Nissim et al., 2009) exposed to conflict-related events. At the same time, psychological distress was found to play a significant role in citizens’ ability to regulate perceptions of threat. Citizens who suffer from conflict-induced psychological distress demonstrate cognitive preoccupation with conflict-related stimuli, heightened perception of vulnerability to conflict-related threats and difficulties in disengagement from conflict-related threatening stimuli (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Ehlers & Clark, 2000; but see Shahar, Elad-Strenger & Henrich, 2012 for the resilience-related factors in exposure to emotionally distressing events). Citizens who suffer from chronic psychological distress respond to conflict-related threats with increased arousal and are more likely to activate defensive strategies

aimed at minimizing immediate and future victimization in response to perceived threats (e.g. Vythilingam et al., 2007).

Although the association between exposure to violent conflict and symptoms of psychological distress is well established in the literature (e.g. Di Grande et al., 2011), the effects of psychological distress on political attitudes have only recently been systematically examined. Recent research indicates that chronic psychological distress plays a central role in inducing elevated threat perceptions in response to conflict-related events, ultimately leading to increased support for violent political action, particularly towards the threatening agents (Canetti-Nissim et al., 2009; Canetti et al., 2015; Hirsch-Hoefler et al., 2014). Considering the chronic psychological effects of exposure to conflict thus sheds more light on the conditions under which individuals respond to threat perceptions with heightened reactivity and protectiveness. More specifically, the personal experience of conflict-related threats and the ability to cope with such experiences constructively strongly depends on the psychological resources available to the individual. Chronic psychological distress not only depletes self-regulatory resources and makes one more alert to acute threat perceptions (Di Grande et al., 2011), but also increases the extremity and even riskiness of one’s reactions to such threats (Ben-Zur & Zeidner, 2009).

We hypothesize that chronic psychological distress is a particularly important factor to consider when predicting such extreme forms of political incivility as violence against political figures, especially in a conflict zone. Although previous research reveals a relation between acute threat perceptions and support for violence against out-groups and minorities independent of psychological distress levels, coping with acute threat perceptions by supporting violence against in-group authority figures, an action with potentially severe ramifications for the future and stability of the in-group itself may be exacerbated by more profound and continuous psychological effects of conflict exposure. We therefore hypothesize the following:

H3: Perceived threat will affect citizens’ levels of support for violence against politicians when psychological distress levels are high, but not when they are low.

The present study

Over the course of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, both societies involved have been exposed to numerous military operations and violent uprisings, resulting in

heightened levels of psychological distress and threat perceptions among members of both societies (Al-Krenawi, Graham & Kanat-Maymon, 2009; Canetti et al., 2015).

Attitudes regarding the Israeli–Palestinian conflict constitute a key issue dimension in political discourse and a central domain of dispute between political leftists and rightists in the Jewish-Israeli society, with leftists representing more ‘dovish’ conflict-related attitudes and rightists more ‘hawkish’ positions. Nevertheless, the left–right divide in Israel also extends to differences in value priorities regarding the character of the state of Israel: whereas leftists tend to prioritize civil rights, individual freedoms, and democratic values, rightists tend to prioritize values associated with the preservation of established cultural and religious traditions and hierarchies, and to endorse enhanced security measures designed to protect the social order from threat (e.g. Shamir & Arian, 1994). Typically, Israeli rightists also score significantly higher than leftists on authoritarianism measures (Rubinstein, 1997).

The assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 by a right-wing activist, which is thus far the only assassination of an Israeli politician by a domestic perpetrator, sent a huge shock wave through Israeli society (Yuchtman-Yaar & Hermann, 1998). Despite the surprise, however, the murder was preceded by a harsh atmosphere of criticism against Rabin that prevailed in the months before the murder, including an extreme rhetoric of in-group betrayal employed by his opponents that encouraged the public to think of him as a traitor who endangered the Jewish people by signing a peace agreement with the Palestinians earlier that year. Such rhetoric of incitement against political officials has remained an often-endorsed vehicle to express political dissatisfaction for at least some Israelis. Although explicit support for violence against politicians currently originates predominantly from the right end of the political spectrum, even against politicians who identify with the political right (Berl Katznelson Foundation, 2016), politicians from both ends of the political spectrum have in the past decades been subjected to threats and straightforward attacks for their political decisions, beliefs, and ideas (e.g. Sterman, 2015; *Times of Israel*, 2015). Taken together, Israel’s historical background and sociopolitical characteristics make it an ideal context to examine the associations between the psychological implications and conflict exposure and support for violence against politicians.

The present study employs a longitudinal design, using an original two-wave panel among a large

nationally representative sample of Jewish-Israelis. The use of a longitudinal design enables cautious inference of causal relations, as well as an investigation of the long-term implications of ongoing threat perceptions and psychological distress and the persistence of their effects. Although scholars of conflicts tend to study conflict at one particular time point, due to the rapidly changing nature of conflicts, such studies are limited in terms of their long-term external validity.

This study was conducted between mid-2007 (T1) and the beginning of 2008 (T2). This period marked a sharp escalation in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict: between 2007 and 2008, Palestinian militants from the Gaza strip launched more rocket and mortar attacks on Israel than in any other year that decade,¹ leading to a particularly high prevalence of psychological distress and threat perceptions in the Jewish-Israeli population (e.g. Neria, Bravova & Halper, 2010). This period was also characterized by a dramatic decrease in Jewish-Israelis’ opposition to political violence compared to previous years (Arian et al., 2008). Importantly, the Israeli government at the time was led by the centrist ‘Kadima’ party, and the coalition consisted of representatives from both rightist and leftist parties (Hazan, 2006). The policies led by prime minister Ehud Olmert had thus both hawkish and dovish elements: on the one hand, he led the war on Lebanon in 2006 and two large-scale military operations in Syria (2007) and Gaza (2008), and on the other hand he participated in the Annapolis peace conference in November 2007, in which he declared Israel’s intention to negotiate with the Palestinians about all issues (Cooper, 2007). Given the centrist agenda and structure of the government, and considering that we examined general support for violence against politicians without specifying their ideological affiliation, we were able to conduct a relatively less biased examination of rightists’ and leftists’ support for this specific form of political violence.²

Method

Participants were initially (T1) recruited between 30 May and 18 July 2007, using a random telephone survey

¹ See: https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/pdf/PDF_07_177_1.pdf

² To rule out the possibility that leftists’ or rightists’ support for violence against politicians was affected by their satisfaction with the functioning of this specific government, we controlled for this variable as part of our robustness check analyses (see Online appendix, section 3F).

based on stratified samples to ensure that the sample would be representative of Israeli-Jews. Of eligible candidates contacted at T1, 1,365 agreed to participate in the study (68% response rate³). Six months later (18 November 2007–31 January 2008) 81% of T1 participants agreed to be surveyed again (T2), resulting in a final sample of 1,103 participants (516 male and 587 female; $M_{age} = 46.70$, $SD = 15.89$; 46% rightists, 37% centrists, 17% leftists), which is largely representative of the adult Jewish-Israeli population in terms of age, gender, and political orientation (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2007).⁴

Participants rated their political orientation, conflict-related threat perceptions, psychological distress, and support for violence against politicians in both waves of measurement.⁵ To eliminate the potential confounding effects of prior exposure to terrorism (see Canetti et al., 2009) and degree of religiosity (see Zaidise, Canetti-Nisim & Pedahzur, 2007), we included these variables in our study as potential controls, along with standard demographic covariates (age, gender, income, education), all measured at T1.

Variables⁶

Support for violence against politicians, the dependent variable, was measured using three items adapted from Pedahzur, Hasasi & Brichta (2000), assessing the extent to which participants legitimize violence against politicians to eliminate political threat, without specifying their ideological affiliation (high-ranking ministers vs. members of the parliament (Knesset) or membership in the coalition or opposition). Items were rated on a six-point scale, where higher scores represent stronger support for violence ($\alpha = .72$ in T1; $.71$ in T2).

Perceived threat, the main independent variable of interest, was measured using one item rated on a four-point scale, adapted from Huddy et al. (2002) to include current threats to the Israeli population by missiles, terror, and unconventional weapons attacks.

Psychological distress was measured using the 17-item posttraumatic stress disorder symptom scale (PSS-I; Foa et al., 1993). Participants reported symptoms occurring for at least one month, relating to their direct or indirect exposure to violent conflict, based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) criteria. Items were rated on a four-point scale (0–3) and a distress symptoms total score was calculated by summing these items ($\alpha = .91$ in T1; $.89$ in T2).

Political orientation was assessed using the standard self-definition item: 1 = extreme right, 2 = rightist, 3 = moderate rightist, 4 = centrist, 5 = moderate leftists, 6 = leftist, 7 = extreme leftist. Since our hypotheses concerned self-identified leftists and rightists, and given that our sample was slightly skewed to the right (reflecting the distribution of ideological self-placement in Israel), we divided participants into two ideological groups, based on their responses: ‘rightists’ (rated 1–3 on the political ideology scale; coded as 1) and ‘leftists’ (rated 5–7 on the political ideology scale; coded as 2). ‘Centrists’ (rated 4 on the political ideology scale) received a missing value on this variable.⁷

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table I presents bivariate correlations between the main study variables. As the table indicates, leftist political ideology was negatively associated with psychological distress, weakly negatively associated with support for violence against politicians, and only marginally negatively associated with perceived threat. Perceived threat was positively associated with psychological distress, and psychological distress was positively associated with support for violence against politicians. Perceived threat was not, however, directly correlated with support for violence against politicians. As shown in Table I, the mean support for violence against politicians was relatively low in both time points, with 6.4% of participants reporting some support for such violence in T1, and 4.4% in T2.⁸

³ This response rate compares favorably with other phone surveys in Israel and the USA (Galea et al., 2002).

⁴ Independent t-tests were conducted to examine the differences between participants who took part in both waves and those who dropped out across all study variables (see Online appendix, section 2).

⁵ Only T1 ratings of conflict-related threat perceptions and psychological distress were used for the purpose of our analyses. T2 ratings were used in a cross-lagged structural equation modeling analysis, as part of our robustness checks (see Online appendix, section 3A).

⁶ Full item lists are provided in the Online appendix, section 1.

⁷ We also examined our hypotheses controlling for ideological extremity and with centrists included in the data (see Online appendix, section 3C).

⁸ Percentages were calculated based on the number of participants whose ratings of support for violence were above the scale midpoint (3.5) in each measurement wave.

Table I. Bivariate correlations between the study variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Leftist political ideology	.27	.44	1						
T1 Perceived threat	3.01	.94	-.07	1					
T1 Psychological distress	6.76	8.05	-.17***	.24***	1				
T1 Violence against politicians	1.78	.98	-.15***	.03	.23***	1			
T2 Perceived threat	2.83	.93	-.12**	.42***	.31***	.08	1		
T2 Psychological distress	5.54	6.91	-.13**	.27***	.55***	.14**	.31***	1	
T2 Violence against politicians	1.61	.77	-.19***	.09*	.22***	.35***	.02	.32***	1

****p* < .001, ***p* < .01, **p* < .05 (two-tailed significance).

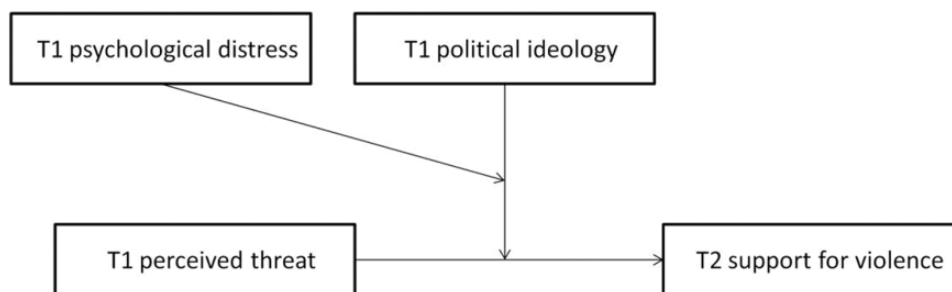


Figure 1. Hypothesized longitudinal model

This model explains changes in support for violence against politicians as a result of interactive effects of perceived threat, psychological distress, and political ideology.

Interactive effects

First, we centered the continuous variables (perceived threat, psychological distress), and dummy coded the political orientation variable (0 = rightists, 1 = leftists).

To examine the interactive longitudinal effects of T1 perceived threat, political ideology, and psychological distress (independent variables) on T2 support for violence against politicians (dependent variable), we ran a moderated moderation analysis employing Hayes’s (2013) PROCESS regression procedure (Model 3), controlling for baseline (T1) support for violence. This analysis enabled us to examine the longitudinal effects of T1 perceived threat on T2 support for violence against politicians, at different levels of psychological distress (low/high) among different ideological groups (leftists/rightists). The research model, presented in Figure 1, can be expressed in the following equation, where Y stands for T2 support for violence against politicians, X for T1 perceived threat, M for T1 psychological distress, and W for T1 political ideology:

$$Y = i_Y + b_1X + b_2M + b_3W + b_4XM + b_5XW + b_6MW + b_7XMW + e_Y \quad (1)$$

Table II. Full model output of the moderated moderation analysis: T1 *Psychological distress* and *Political ideology* as moderating the effects of T1 *Perceived threat* on T2 *Support for violence against politicians*

<i>Model summary</i>	<i>T2 support for violence against politicians</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
T1 Perceived threat	.01	.03
T1 Psychological distress	.01	.00
T1 Political ideology	-.22**	.08
T1 Perceived threat × T1 Psychological distress	.00	.00
T1 Perceived threat × T1 Political ideology	-.17*	.07
T1 Psychological distress × T1 Political ideology	.01	.01
T1 Perceived threat × T1 Psychological distress × T1 Political ideology	-.03*	.01
T1 Support for violence	.28***	.03
Model R ²	.18***	
F (<i>df</i>)	(8,646) = 17.84	

SE = Standard error; unstandardized coefficients are reported, bias corrected 95% CIs. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

The full output of this three-way interaction analysis is presented in Table II. As shown in Table II, the T1 perceived threat \times T1 political ideology interaction significantly predicted T2 support for violence against politicians ($b = -.17$, $SE = .07$, $t = -2.25$, $p = .025$, $[CI] = [-.32, -.02]$). Nevertheless, as hypothesized, this interaction was qualified by a significant three-way interaction of T1 perceived threat \times T1 psychological distress \times T1 political ideology interaction on T2 support for violence against politicians ($b = -.03$, $SE = .01$, $t = -2.21$, $p = .027$, $[CI] = [-.05, -.01]$), such that the T1 perceived threat \times T1 political ideology interaction was only significant when psychological distress was high (1SD above average; $b = -.52$, $SE = .16$, $t = -3.29$, $p = .001$, $[CI] = [-.83, -.21]$), but not when it was low (1SD below average; $b = -.01$, $SE = .09$, $t = -.16$, $p = .871$, $[CI] = [-.20, .17]$), consistent with Hypothesis H3. An examination of the conditional effects of T1 perceived threat at different values of the political ideology moderator (rightists = 1SD below average; leftists = 1SD above average) under high psychological distress (1SD above average) revealed that, consistent with hypothesis H1a, T1 perceived threat was associated with increased support for violence in T2 among rightists ($b = .19$, $SE = .06$, $t = 2.99$, $p = .003$, $[CI] = [.07, .32]$). Among leftists, also as hypothesized (H2b), T1 perceived threat was associated with decreased support for violence in T2 ($b = -.33$, $SE = .14$, $t = -2.26$, $p = .024$, $[CI] = [-.61, -.04]$) (see Figure 2). Importantly, the differences between leftists' and rightists' support for violence against politicians was only significant under high distress and high threat ($b = -.58$, $SE = .17$, $t = -3.34$, $p = .001$, $[CI] = [-.92, -.24]$), but not under high distress and low threat ($b = .40$, $SE = .23$, $t = 1.77$, $p = .077$, $[CI] = [-.04, .85]$), low distress and high threat ($b = -.25$, $SE = .14$, $t = -1.83$, $p = .067$, $[CI] = [-.52, .02]$), and low distress and low threat ($b = -.22$, $SE = .13$, $t = -1.81$, $p = .070$, $[CI] = [-.47, .02]$).^{9,10}

⁹ We also examined whether the results hold when covariates are controlled for. Covariates included age, income, education, and degree of religiosity (all of which were entered as continuous covariates), gender (0 = men; 1 = women), and two items assessing prior exposure to terrorism (coded as 1 = no, 2 = yes; see Online appendix for description of the items). The T1 perceived threat \times T1 psychological distress \times T1 political ideology interaction on T2 support for violence against politicians remained significant when all covariates were controlled for ($b = -.03$, $SE = .01$, $t = -2.21$, $p = .027$, $[CI] = [-.05, -.003]$). Under high T1 psychological distress, T1 perceived threat was associated with increased T2 support for violence in among

Robustness checks

To provide a more rigorous examination of our moderation hypothesis, we tested the hypothesized three-way interaction in a full multigroup cross-lagged structural equation model, where all directional effects between the study variables were estimated simultaneously, that is, controlling for one another. The results, shown in the Online appendix (section 3A), confirm our original hypothesis and rule out reverse effects of T1 support for violence on either of our T1 predictors. In Section 3B, we examine two alternative hypotheses to our three-way moderation hypothesis: (1) T1 psychological distress mediates (rather than moderates) the effects of T1 perceived threat on T2 support for violence; (2) T1 perceived threat mediates (rather than moderates) the effects of T1 psychological distress on T2 support for violence. Our data do not provide support for either of these hypotheses. We also undertake a number of additional robustness checks related to the construction of the moderators, to ensure that the findings are not sensitive to alternative model specifications of political ideology (including separate analyses among centrists, leftists, and rightists) and psychological distress. Detailed results of these robustness checks are available in the Online appendix (sections 3C–D). We also examine exposure to terrorism as a potential moderator in the relationship between perceived threat and support for violence against politicians among self-identified leftists and rightists, instead of psychological distress (section 3E). Finally, we examine the role of satisfaction with the functioning of the current government as a predictor and as a covariate in our model (section 3F). Overall, the interactive longitudinal effects of perceived threat, psychological distress, and political ideology on violence against politicians remain in all model specifications, thus increasing our confidence in the validity of the findings.

Discussion

What motivates citizens' support for violence against politicians? Although support for violence against politicians is a serious cause for concern in many political contexts, relatively little research has been dedicated to

rightists ($b = .12$, $SE = .06$, $t = 2.11$, $p = .035$, $[CI] = [.01, .23]$), and decreased support for T2 violence among leftists ($b = -.25$, $SE = .12$, $t = -1.99$, $p = .047$, $[CI] = [-.49, -.004]$).

¹⁰ We also analyzed our three-way moderation model in each wave separately, revealing similar directional trends to those evinced in the longitudinal model, among both rightists and leftists.

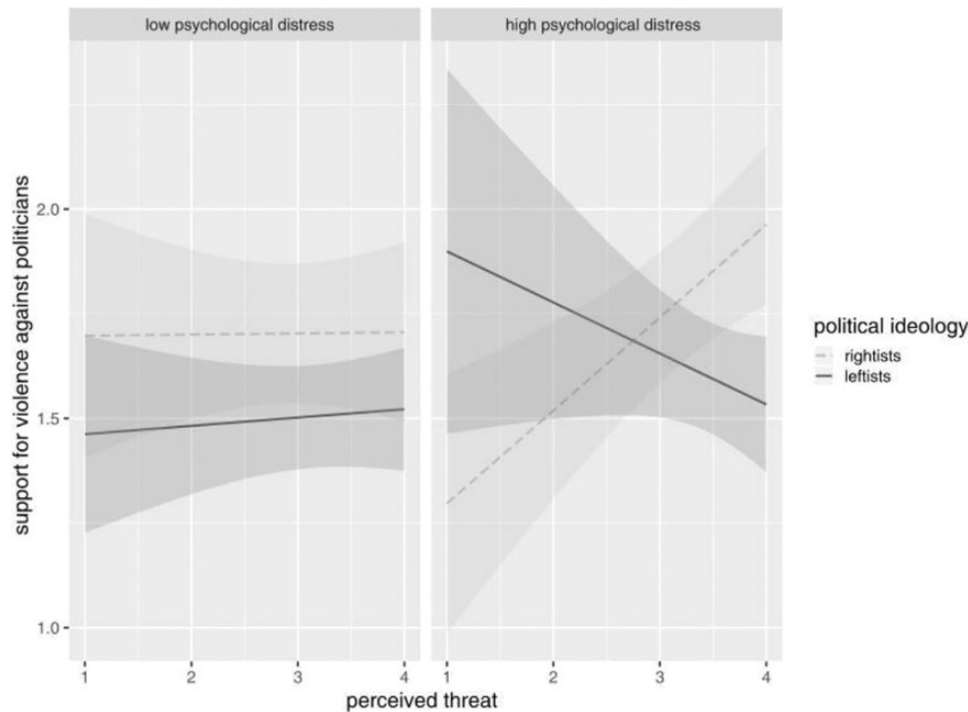


Figure 2. Interactive effects on support for violence against politicians

The interactive effects of perceived threat and political ideology (rightists/leftists) on support for violence against politicians under high and low levels of psychological distress.

identifying the motivations underlying this phenomenon. Inspired by insights from political-psychological research, this study is the first to examine the interactive effects of psychological (threat perceptions and psychological distress) and political (political orientation) predictors of support for violence against politicians in the context of prolonged exposure to conflict. These effects were examined in a two-wave panel study among Jewish-Israelis.

Consistent with previous findings on the effects of perceived threat on political violence against threatening out-groups and ethnic minorities, our findings suggest that conflict-induced threat perceptions play an important role in predicting support for violence against politicians. Nevertheless, our findings point to an important boundary condition to these effects. Our findings suggest that the level of chronic psychological distress determines the *strength* of the relationship between perceived threat and attitudes towards political violence. First, support for violence against politicians was only weakly associated with political ideology when psychological distress was not controlled for. Second, and most importantly, perceived threat only affected support for violence against politicians when psychological distress levels were high, but not when they were low (consistent with H3).

This finding may imply that perceived threat affects support for this extreme form of political violence only when it is experienced in the context of more extreme and chronic conflict-related psychological distress. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that in the context of prolonged violent conflict, chronic psychological distress should be taken into account as an important factor in predicting support for political violence, as it underlies and facilitates the effects of threat perceptions on citizens' attitudes in contexts of prolonged conflict (e.g. Canetti et al., 2015; Canetti-Nisim et al., 2009).

This study, however, suggests that this factor is particularly relevant when predicting support for violence against public officials, as a specific and highly extreme form of political violence. The fact that the level of psychological distress qualified the general finding linking perceived threat to support for violence may also explain why coping with conflict-related threat by endorsing violence against public officials is a relatively rare and extreme phenomenon, particularly compared to violence against minorities and out-groups, which was the focus of most previous research. Our study thus suggests that failing to consider psychological distress as a key factor in shaping citizens' coping strategies with threat

perceptions in the context of prolonged conflict, and particularly with regard to support for this specific and highly extreme form of political violence, will only generate a partial picture of the conditions under which people will support such acts. Importantly, our study focused on chronic distress due to conflict-related events, as the psychological implications of prolonged conflict were at the focus of our study, and consistent with previous studies on psychological distress in this context (e.g. Canetti et al., 2015; Canetti-Nisim et al., 2009). Future studies are encouraged to examine whether psychological distress from other sources (e.g. economic instability) play a similar role in exacerbating perceptions of conflict-related threat perceptions.

Furthermore, the *direction* of the effects of perceived threat was qualified by individuals' self-placement on the left-right continuum. Our findings did not support the predictions of the conservative shift hypothesis (Jost et al., 2003), which suggests that citizens across the political spectrum, and particularly on the left, respond to perceived threat with increased support for violence. Instead, our findings suggest that under high levels of psychological distress, conflict-induced threat perceptions *increase* rightists' support, and *decrease* leftists' support, for violence against politicians. These findings are consistent with the value reinforcement hypothesis (H2a and H3b), according to which individuals respond to perceived threat by increasing their endorsement of the values prescribed by their ideological convictions (e.g. Stenner, 2005). Insofar as political rightists are generally more concerned than leftists with societal threat and uncertainty, and tend to support more confrontational means to protect the social order from threat (e.g. Jost, 2006), and insofar as leftists prioritize values associated with avoiding harm to individuals over protecting the social order from threat (Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009; Haidt, 2012), it seems that perceived threat combined with high levels of chronic psychological distress further strengthen these preferences. Future studies are encouraged to directly examine whether threat-induced shifts in leftists' and rightists' value preferences and priorities indeed underlie these patterns.

Nevertheless, the differential patterns among leftists and rightists can also be attributed to the unique characteristics of the specific form of political violence under investigation. Although there are previous findings supporting both the conservative shift hypothesis and the value reinforcement hypothesis with regard to support for violence against national out-groups and ethnic minorities, public support for violence against politicians might be a particularly polarizing issue, as it targets

authority figures who represent the national in-group. Although rightists are generally more supportive of confrontational strategies to protect against threat to the social order, they are also typically more respectful of authorities representing it (Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009; Jost et al., 2003), also in Israel (Rubinstein, 1997). Our findings suggest that when formal authority figures are perceived as the source of the threat to the social order, rightists are more likely than leftists to legitimize violence against them to preserve the social order. It thus seems that rightists not only tend to hold national in-group authorities in high esteem, but also entrust them with the protection of the nation against threat and with the role of maintaining the stability of the social order. When the social order is perceived to be under threat, they may therefore hold them accountable for what they see as neglect or betrayal of their commitment to the national in-group. This result may help explain why in Israel, where conflict-related threat perceptions and psychological distress levels are high, support for violence against politicians has been historically more prominent among Israeli rightists. Local variations in the values associated with the political right and left should be taken into account in any future replication of these findings in other conflict zones.

Importantly, as previously mentioned, our findings suggest that Jewish-Israeli rightists and leftists do not differ in their support for violence against politicians under low levels of perceived threat and/or of psychological distress. Put differently, ideological differences in support for violence against politicians only arise when the acute and chronic psychological consequences of conflict are experienced quite strongly. These findings may be attributed to the specific form of political violence that is the focus of the present study. The fact that under non-threatening or non-stressful conditions support for violence against politicians is equally endorsed by rightists and leftists may attest to the perceived extremity or uniqueness of this type of political violence (at least in the Israeli context, in which the assassination of Rabin has had quite dramatic effects on society). These findings therefore call into question the general assumption that rightists (or hawks) tend to show stronger support for political violence, regardless of its specific form, and further attest to the importance of examining the underpinnings of public support for different types of political violence, considering their unique characteristics. Future studies are encouraged to examine these hypotheses in political contexts in which the use of this type of political violence is considered more common or more legitimate.

In this study, we measured participants' support for violence against politicians without specifying their ideological affiliation, and without indicating whether they serve or do not serve in the current government or parliament. Indeed, our robustness checks indicate that participants' satisfaction with the performance of the current government was only weakly associated with their ideological self-placement. Furthermore, our results remained significant even when controlling for participants' satisfaction with the performance of the current government. Hence, we can cautiously conclude that the chosen political context enabled us to conduct a relatively less biased examination of rightists' and leftists' support for this specific form of political violence. Nevertheless, it is likely that explicitly specifying the political affiliation of the politicians at hand could alter the results, such that participants' support for violence against a given politician will be moderated by the extent to which they see her as a member of their political in-group or out-group. It is important to note, however, that once an in-group politician is perceived as betraying the interests of the political in-group, she may no longer be considered a member of the political in-group. As such, her very deviance from the political in-group norms or expectations may justify support for violence against her, even if she is officially representing the political in-group.

Also, the direction of the association relation between conflict-induced perceived threat and support for violence against politicians can be affected by the relation of a given politician to the threatening out-group. For example, if the politician is an inciter of violence against the out-group, increased threat from that out-group is less likely to increase support for harming that politician, even among hawkish participants. The goal of our study, however, was to identify the psychological and contextual factors generating support for violence against politicians in general, regardless of their specific identity, as a means to cope with conflict-induced threat and distress.

While the findings of this study bear potentially important implications for the understanding of the motivations underlying support for violence against politicians in the context of prolonged conflict, two important limitations should be taken into account. First, we measured citizens' attitudinal support for violence against politicians rather than their actual participation in such acts. Although correlations between attitudes and behaviors are often far from absolute, research in the social sciences has come to rely on attitudinal measures particularly when the direct measurement of behavior is

difficult or impossible, as is the case with participation in acts of political violence (Pedahzur, Hasisi & Brichta, 2000).

Second, the generalizability of these findings to other contexts of protracted conflict remains to be examined. It may well be that the polarization in support for violence against politicians under high levels of conflict-related threat and distress are unique to the Israeli context, rather than reflecting fundamental ideological differences in threat responses. It may be that the specific values associated with being a rightist or leftist in Israel (particularly with regard to expectation from, and relation to, political authorities) underlie these observed differences. Furthermore, Israel's particular history and political climate, as a relatively collectivist country which has been involved in a protracted conflict since its establishment, might have affected the strength of the association between perceived threat and support for political violence. Future studies are encouraged to examine the interactive effects of perceived threat, psychological distress, and ideological self-placement in other areas of protracted conflict, and also in contexts in which the implications of conflict are less salient and pervasive.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study has several notable strengths. The longitudinal design tested the temporal relationships between our predictors and support for violence against politicians. Scholars of conflicts tend to study conflict at one particular time point; yet, due to the rapidly changing nature of conflicts, studies conducted during a single point in time naturally have limitations in terms of their long-term external validity. The longitudinal design implemented in this study therefore increases its contribution to the literature. A second methodological strength is the use of a large nationally representative sample, which allows for ample statistical power to examine the moderation model reliably.

From a theoretical point of view, this study proposes a novel perspective on support for violence against politicians, by framing it as a protective strategy against perceived threat from exposure to protracted conflict. Although our findings confirm that only a minority of Jewish-Israelis support violence against politicians, the justification and endorsement of such acts may have highly salient effects on society. First, the legitimization of violence against public figures, even among relatively small subgroups in society, may create an atmosphere that directly or indirectly instigates such actions (Yuchtman-Yaar & Hermann, 1998). Second, support for such actions reflects, in itself, at least some level of mistrust and delegitimization of the nation's

representatives and institutions. Citizens' failure to denounce such violence may undermine democratic principles crucial for the stability of the political system, as democracy largely depends on the peaceful resolution of differences (Kalmoe, 2014). By pointing to the importance of understanding the interactive role of psychological and political factors in determining public support for such acts, our findings therefore contribute to the understanding of a relatively understudied phenomenon with potentially catastrophic effects on political stability. From a practical perspective, addressing the role of political ideology in support for such acts of political violence is another crucial lesson arising from this study, which should inform efforts that seek to address and prevent the support for such acts.

Replication data

The dataset and do-files for the empirical analysis in this article, as well as the Online appendix, can be found at <http://www.prio.org/jpr/datasets>.


Acknowledgments


We thank Mahshov Institute for enabling our data collection, Jutta Proch (<https://statistics-guide.com/>) for her statistical advice, and the numerous friends and colleagues who have helped along the way.

Funding

This research was made possible, in part, by grants from the National Institute of Mental Health (R01 MH073687), the Israel Science Foundation (487/08), and the US–Israel Binational Science Foundation (2009460).

ORCID iD

Julia Elad-Strenger  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8906-0039>

Daphna Canetti  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0794-4090>

References

Adorno, Theodor Wiesengrund (1950) *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Al-Krenawi, Alean; John R Graham & Yaniv Kanat-Maymon (2009) Analysis of trauma exposure, symptomatology and functioning in Jewish Israeli and Palestinian adolescents. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 195(5): 427–432.

American Psychiatric Association (2000) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.

Arian, Asher; Tamar Hermann, Nir Atmor, Yael Hadar, Yuval Lebel & Hila Zaban (2008) *Auditing Israeli Democracy 2008: Between the State and Civil Society*. Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute.

Bar-Tal, Daniel (2013) *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ben Shitrit, Lihi; Julia Elad-Strenger & Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler (2017) Gender differences in support for direct and indirect political aggression in the context of protracted conflict. *Journal of Peace Research* 54(6): 733–747.

Ben-Zur, Hasida & Moshe Zeidner (2009) Threat to life and risk-taking behaviors: A review of empirical findings and explanatory models. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 13(2): 109–128.

Berkebile, Richard E (2017) What is domestic terrorism? A method for classifying events from the global terrorism database. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 29(1): 1–26.

Berl Katznelson foundation (2016). The hate report (<http://hasata.berl.org.il/?research=%d7%93%d7%95%d7%97-%d7%94%d7%a7%d7%a8%d7%99%d7%90%d7%95%d7%aa-%d7%9c%d7%90%d7%9c%d7%99%d7%9e%d7%95%d7%aa>).

Bonanno, George A & John T Jost (2006) Conservative shift among high-exposure survivors of the September 11th terrorist attacks. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 28(4): 311–323.

Braithwaite, Valerie (1998) The value orientations underlying liberalism-conservatism. *Personality and Individual Differences* 25(3): 575–589.

Browne, Mark J & Robert E Hoyt (2000) The demand for flood insurance: Empirical evidence. *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 20(3): 291–306.

Canetti, Daphna; Julia Elad-Strenger, Iris Lavi, Dana Guy & Daniel Bar-Tal (2015) Exposure to violence, ethos of conflict, and support for compromise: Surveys in Israel, East Jerusalem, West Bank, and Gaza. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61(1): 84–113.

Canetti, Daphna; Gilad Hirschberger, Carmit Rapaport, Julia Elad-Strenger, Tsachi Ein-Dor, Shifra Rosenzweig, Tom Pyszczynski & Stevan E Hobfoll (2018) Collective trauma from the lab to the real world: The effects of the holocaust on contemporary Israeli political cognitions. *Political Psychology* 39(1): 3–21.

Canetti-Nisim, Daphna; Eran Halperin, Keren Sharvit & Stevan E Hobfoll (2009) A new stress-based model of political extremism: Personal exposure to terrorism, psychological distress, and exclusionist political attitudes. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53(3): 363–389.

Carney, Dana R; John T Jost, Samuel D Gosling & Jeff Potter (2008) The secret lives of liberals and

- conservatives: Personality profiles, interaction styles, and the things they leave behind. *Political Psychology* 29(6): 807–840.
- Central Bureau of Statistics (2007) *Statistical Abstract of Israel*. Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics.
- Cooper, Helene (2007) Olmert backs Mideast peace conference. *New York Times* 5 November (<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/05/world/middleeast/05mideast.html>).
- Di Grande, Laura; Yuval Neria, Robert M Brackbill, Paul Pulliam & Sandro Galea (2011) Long-term posttraumatic stress symptoms among 3,271 civilian survivors of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. *American Journal of Epidemiology* 173(3): 271–281.
- Ehlers, Anke & David M Clark (2000) A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 38(4): 319–345.
- Elad-Strenger, Julia (2013) Changing minds: A psychodynamic interpretation of Kuhnian paradigm change. *Review of General Psychology* 17(1): 40–52.
- Elad-Strenger, Julia (2016) Activism as a heroic quest for symbolic immortality: An existential perspective on collective action. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 4(1): 44–65.
- Elad-Strenger, Julia & Golan Shahar (2017) Revisiting the effects of societal threat perceptions on conflict-related political positions: A three-wave study. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62(8):1753–1783.
- Elad-Strenger, Julia; Zvi Fajerman, Moran Schiller, Avi Besser & Golan Shahar (2013) Risk-resilience dynamics of ideological factors in distress after the evacuation from Gush Katif. *International Journal of Stress Management* 20(1): 57–75.
- Elad-Strenger, Julia; Jutta Proch & Thomas Kessler (2019) Is disgust a ‘conservative’ emotion? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167219880191>
- Federico, Christopher M & Monica C Schneider (2007) Political expertise and the use of ideology: Moderating effects of evaluative motivation. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71(2): 221–252.
- Feldman, Stanley & Leonie Huddy (2014) Not so simple: The multidimensional nature and diverse origins of political ideology. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 37(3): 312–313.
- Feldman, Stanley & Karen Stenner (1997) Perceived threat and authoritarianism. *Political Psychology* 18(4): 741–770.
- Foa, Edna B; David S Riggs, Constance V Dancu & Barbara O Rothbaum (1993) Reliability and validity of a brief instrument for assessing post-traumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 6(4): 459–473.
- Fritsche, Immo; Eva Jonas & Thomas Fankhänel (2008) The role of control motivation in mortality salience effects on ingroup support and defense. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95(3): 524–541.
- Galea, Sandro; Jennifer Ahern, Heidi Resnick, Dean Kilpatrick, Michael Bucuvalas, Joel Gold & David Vlahov (2002) Psychological sequelae of the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City. *New England Journal of Medicine* 346(13): 982–987.
- Graham, Jesse; Jonathan Haidt & Brian A Nosek (2009) Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96(5): 1029–1046.
- Greenberg, Jeff; Sheldon Solomon & Tom Pyszczynski (1997) Terror management theory of self-esteem and cultural worldviews: Empirical assessments and conceptual refinements. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 29: 61–139.
- Griset, Pamala L & Sue Mahan (2003) *Terrorism in Perspective*. London: Sage.
- Haidt, Jonathan (2012) *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Vintage.
- Hayes, Andrew F (2013) *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*. New York: Guilford.
- Hazan, Reuven Y (2006) Israel’s ‘big band’: The parliamentary elections of 2006. *Representation* 42(3): 243–252.
- Henderson, Conway W (1991) Conditions affecting the use of political repression. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35(1): 120–142.
- Hetherington, Marc & Elizabeth Suhay (2011) Authoritarianism, threat, and Americans’ support for the war on terror. *American Journal of Political Science* 55(3): 546–560.
- Hibbing, John R; Kevin B Smith & John R Alford (2014) Differences in negativity bias underlie variations in political ideology. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 37(3): 297–350.
- Hirschberger, Gilad & Tom Pyszczynski (2011) An existential perspective on violent solutions to ethno-political conflict. In: Philip Shaver & Mario Mikulincer (eds) *Human Aggression and Violence: Causes, Manifestations, and Consequences*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 297–314.
- Hirsch-Hoefler, Sivan; Daphna Canetti, Carmit Rapaport & Stevan E Hobfoll (2014) Conflict will harden your heart: Exposure to violence, psychological distress, and peace barriers in Israel and Palestine. *British Journal of Political Science* 46(4): 1–15.
- Huddy, Leonie; Stanley Feldman, Theresa Capelos & Colin Provost (2002) The consequences of terrorism: Disentangling the effects of personal and national threat. *Political Psychology* 23(3): 485–509.
- Huddy, Leonie; Stanley Feldman & Christopher Weber (2007) The political consequences of perceived threat and felt insecurity. *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 614(1): 131–153.
- Iqbal, Zaryab & Christopher Zorn (2008) The political consequences of assassination. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52(3): 385–400.
- Jenkins-Smith, Hank C & Kerry G Herron (2009) Rock and a hard place: Public willingness to trade civil rights and

- liberties for greater security. *Politics & Policy* 37(5): 1095–1129.
- Jones, Howard (2003) *Death of a Generation: How the Assassinations of Diem and JFK Prolonged the Vietnam War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jost, John T (2006) The end of the end of ideology. *American Psychologist* 61(7): 651–670.
- Jost, John T; Jack Glaser, Arie W Kruglanski & Frank J Sulloway (2003) Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin* 129(3): 339–375.
- Kalmoe, Nathan P (2010) Does violent political rhetoric fuel political violence? Support for political violence in a national survey experiment. APSA 2010 Annual Meeting paper (<https://ssrn.com/abstract=1657314>).
- Kalmoe, Nathan P (2014) Fueling the fire: Violent metaphors, trait aggression, and support for political violence. *Political Communication* 31(4): 545–563.
- Keegan, John (2014) *The First World War*. New York: Random House.
- Kelman, Herbert C & V Lee Hamilton (1989) *Crimes of Obedience: Toward a Social Psychology of Authority and Responsibility*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Kruglanski, Arie W & Donna M Webster (1996) Motivated closing of the mind: ‘Seizing’ and ‘freezing’. *Psychological Review* 103(2): 263–283.
- Kugler, Matthew; John T Jost & Sharareh Noorbaloochi (2014) Another look at moral foundations theory: Do authoritarianism and social dominance orientation explain liberal-conservative differences in ‘moral’ intuitions? *Social Justice Research* 27(4): 413–431.
- McGregor, Ian; Kyle Nash, Nikki Mann & Curtis E Phills (2010) Anxious uncertainty and reactive approach motivation (RAM). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 99(1): 133–147.
- Neria, Yuval; Margarita Bravova & Jessica M Halper (2010) Trauma and PTSD among civilians in the Middle East. *PTSD Research Quarterly* 21(4): 1–8.
- Pedahzur, Ami; Badi Hasisi & Avraham Brichta (2000) A proposed model for explaining political violence in Israel. *World Affairs* 163(1): 18–27.
- Proch, Jutta; Julia Elad-Strenger & Thomas Kessler (2018) Liberalism and conservatism, for a change! Rethinking the association between political orientation and relation to societal change. *Political Psychology* 40(4): 877–903.
- Rapoport, David C & Leonard Weinberg (2013) *The Democratic Experience and Political Violence*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Rubinstein, Gidi (1997) Authoritarianism, political ideology, and religiosity among students of different faculties. *Journal of Social Psychology* 137(5): 559–567.
- Shahar, Golan; Julia Elad-Strenger & Christopher C Henrich (2012) Risky resilience and resilient risk: The key role of intentionality in an emerging dialectics. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 31(6): 618–640.
- Shamir, Michal & Asher Arian (1994) Competing values and policy choices: Israeli public opinion on foreign and security affairs. *British Journal of Political Science* 24(2): 249–271.
- Skitka, Linda J; Pamela J McMurray & Thomas E Burroughs (1991) Willingness to provide post-war aid to Iraq and Kuwait: An application of the contingency model of distributive justice. *Contemporary Social Psychology* 15(4): 179–188.
- Stenner, Karen (2005) *The Authoritarian Dynamic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sterman, Adiv (2015) Politicians’ security boosted following death threats. *Times of Israel* 6 January (<http://www.timesofisrael.com/politicians-security-boosted-following-death-threats/>).
- Tetlock, Philip E (1989) Structure and function in political belief systems. In: John T Cacioppo, RE Petty & TR Geen (eds) *Attitude Structure and Function*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 129–151.
- Times of Israel* (2015) Threats against Rivlin wish him fate similar to Sharon, Rabin (<http://www.timesofisrael.com/threats-against-rivlin-wish-him-fate-similar-to-sharon-rabin/>).
- Vythilingam, Meena; Karina S Blair, Daniel McCaffrey, Matthew Scaramozza, Matthew Jones, Marina Nakic, Krystal Mondillo, K Hadd, Omer Bonne, Derek Mitchell, Daniel S Pine, Dennis S Charney & R James R Blair (2007) Biased emotional attention in post-traumatic stress disorder: A help as well as a hindrance? *Psychological Medicine* 37(10): 1445–1455.
- Yuchtman-Yaar, Ephraim & Tamar Hermann (1998) The latitude of acceptance: Israeli attitudes toward political protest before and after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42(6): 721–743.
- Zaidise, Eran; Daphna Canetti-Nisim & Ami Pedahzur (2007) Politics of God or politics of man? The role of religion and deprivation in predicting support for political violence in Israel. *Political Studies* 55(3): 499–521.

JULIA ELAD-STRENGER, b. 1983, PhD in Psychology (Ben Gurion University, 2015); Assistant Professor, Bar Ilan University (2018–); research interests: political psychology, political ideology, intergroup conflict and violence, and the psychology of public support for right-wing populism.

BRIAN J HALL, b. 1976, PhD in Clinical Psychology (Kent State University, 2011); Associate Professor, Department of Psychology and Director, Global and Community Mental Health Research Group, University of Macau (2014–); Associate, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; research interests: global mental health, trauma, global health, political violence.

STEVAN E HOBFOLL, b. 1951, PhD in Clinical and Community Psychology (University of South Florida); Managing Member, STAR – Stress, Anxiety and Resilience Consultants; research interests: stress, traumatic stress, political psychology, stress and immune system.

DAPHNA CANETTI, b. 1969, PhD in Political Science (University of Haifa, 2003); Professor and Head, School of Political Science (University of Haifa); research interests: political psychology, cyber terrorism, terrorism, political violence, conflict.