

Threats Versus Promises: How the Framing of Concession Appeals in News Coverage Affects Support for Compromise

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The Israeli–Arab conflict is focused on a struggle over land resources, but it also deeply involves issues related to competing narratives and arguments about who is right or wrong. News media play a crucial role in this often disruptive and violent arena. This study examines how news framing affects support for compromise proposals in this conflict. Jewish Israeli respondents received a news report containing a proposal appealing for peace based on compromise, presented by Arab leaders and framed as either a threat or a promise. Interestingly, respondents indicated greater support for the compromise proposal framed as a threat. In line with our expectations, the perceived trustworthiness of the proposal mediated the effect of the news framing on respondents' support.

This study examines how the media's framing of a peace proposal presented by a leading political opponent in the prolonged, intractable Israeli–Arab conflict affects partisans' attitudes to peace based on compromise.

The Israeli–Arab conflict is one of the most enduring and intractable conflicts of our time (Bar-Tal, 2000). Its history has known many dramatic turning points, with periods of severe violence following and being followed by serious attempts at peacemaking and peace building (Maoz, 2004a). In the context of the current breakdown of the peace process, a peaceful solution to the conflict seems no closer than it seemed 50 years ago.

Although this conflict is clearly focused on a struggle over land resources, it also relates profoundly to collective identities, competing narratives, and arguments about who is right and who is wrong (Bar-Tal, 2000). Within this often disruptive and violent arena, media play a vital role. Research has found that the way the media convey and frame messages at times of conflict can significantly affect both escalating conflict and the paving of the road to peace (Wolfsfeld, 2004). Yet despite the recognized

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importance of news framing in forming opinions and attitudes during political conflict (Bar-Tal, 2000; Wolfsfeld, 2002, 2004), empirical examination of the effects of news framing in situations of protracted ethno-political conflict is scarce.

The present study uses an experimental approach to systematically examine the effect of news framing on support for compromise-based peace in the context of the ongoing Israeli–Arab conflict. It attempts to empirically assess the effect of two major frames of reference in the asymmetrical conflict between Israel and the Palestinians—the threat and the promise—on Jewish Israelis’ support for a peaceful solution based on a more equitable distribution of resources between the opposing sides. Two experiments were conducted to examine the effect of an Arab political leader’s press-reported peace proposal on Jewish Israelis’ attitudes to peace. Israeli respondents received a news item containing a proposal for Israeli–Arab peace presented by Saudi Arabia’s King Abdullah and framed as either a threat or an appeal containing a promise. A 2x2 between-respondents experimental design was used to test (1) the effect of framing a compromise proposal by the opposing side in a conflict as a threat or as a promise, and (2) the effect of Jewish Israeli respondents’ hawkish or dovish prior political attitudes on support for this proposal.

Conceptual Framework

Framing theory posits that the way information is presented influences individuals’ responses to the issue at hand (Iyengar, 1991; Nabi, 2003). The key premise of framing literature is that by highlighting certain aspects of an event or policy, guides media consumers’ thoughts about that event or issue in predictable ways to predictable conclusions. Numerous studies have shown that the particular frame imposed on an issue or event can shape opinion on related policies (Druckman, 2001a; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997).

The psychological origins of framing lie in experimental work by Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 1984), in which the term “framing” was used to describe subtle differences in the definition of choice alternatives. Tversky and Kahneman demonstrated that human choice was contingent on the description of choice problems: People behaved differently depending on whether outcomes were framed as potential gains or potential losses, and they tended to tolerate more risk in the domain of losses.

Recently, however, the framing paradigm has received greater attention in political communication research (Scheufele & Iyengar, in press) focused on news media as major framing agents that significantly influence audiences’ political and social perceptions. Because citizens depend primarily on the media for information about the political world, news coverage is a powerful vehicle for political framing effects (Wolfsfeld, 2002). Shanto Iyengar, a prominent framing theorist, argues that viewers are “sensitive to contextual cues when they reason about national affairs. Their explanations of issues like terrorism or poverty are critically dependent upon the particular reference points furnished in media presentations” (Iyengar, 1987). Following Iyengar’s pioneering research on the effects of news framing on public opinion and political attitudes (Iyengar, 1987, 1991), a sizable number of studies in the past two decades have examined the effects of framing of news coverage. It is amply established that variations in news frames can create substantial differences in audiences’ responses, interpretations, and judgments.

Alterations to the presentation of news reports have been found to influence perceptions of events and issues as well as attitudes toward them (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Iyengar, 1991; Mcleod & Detenber, 1999; Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997).

As a major source of public information on political processes, the news media are also a crucial tool for mobilizing opinions in political and social conflicts and disputes (Iyengar, 1987; Wolfsfeld, 2002, 2004). In situations of conflict, the news media relay important messages concerning concessions and compromise solutions offered in the course of negotiations between sides. Because of the inherent ambiguity of negotiation situations, where the issues being negotiated are often of uncertain value, the way these issues are framed or presented in the news media can influence the sides' perception, judgment, and evaluation of proposed concessions and solutions, as well as their readiness to accept these solutions (Maoz, 2004b).

Until now, only limited research has directly studied the effect of framing on support for concessions and compromise proposals in conflict. One such study specifically focused on the effects of news coverage on audience perceptions of compromise proposals in the Israeli-Arab conflict. It found that when news reports framed a press-reported compromise proposal as an "American appeal" made by U.S. officials, it was judged more favorably than the same proposal framed as a "Palestinian appeal" made by Palestinian representatives (Maoz, 1999).

This effect of news framing on attitudes to compromise can be seen as resulting from a cognitive process in which news frames stimulate access to certain information and beliefs that, in turn, influence problem interpretation and decision making (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Chong & Druckman, 2007a, 2007b; Iyengar, 1991; Schuefele & Iyengar, in press). More specifically, and in terms of major theories of social information processing (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990), this effect can be understood as reflecting a process in which information about the source of the compromise proposal (Palestinians vs. Americans) elicits beliefs and expectations that affect support for the proposal.

An important type of framing that can affect support for proposals of compromise in conflict is based on the arguments one side uses to influence the other side to agree to the proposed solution. In the dynamics of negotiation, the type of argument frames the parties to a conflict use in support of a compromise proposal is a significant cue indicating the intentions of the proposal's communicators, their ability to realize their intentions, and the resulting implications for the receivers of accepting or not accepting the proposed compromise.

The few previous experimental studies examining the effects of news framing on support for compromise in conflict mostly focused on effects of the source offering the proposal on the evaluation of the proposal. The goal of the present study is to build on these previous studies—and more broadly on the experimental investigation of effects of news framing on support for peace in conflict—and to examine the extent to which framing compromise proposals as threats or as promises affects support for the proposals.

Threats, Promises, and Compromise Support

Threats and promises are major strategies opponents in conflict employ with the intention of influencing one another's behavior. A side that threatens or promises is pledging to respond in a contingent way to the other side's actions, with the goal or intention of influencing the other's choice. Threats refer to the possible delivery of punishments; promises refer to providing some benefit or rewards to the opponent (Stech, McClintock, & Moss, 1984). The framing of an appeal for concession as a threat or as a promise can serve as an important informational cue indicating the intention of the appealer and the consequent implications of the addressee's acceptance or rejection of the proposed concession. This study aims to examine the ways framing appeals for concession as threats or promises in news coverage affects support for the proposed concession.

Prior research suggests two contradictory expectations of the likelihood that framing a concession appeal as a threat or promise made by one side in a conflict should produce greater support for peace on other sides. According to conflict spiral theory (Jervis, 1976), a threat from an opponent in conflict elicits counterthreats, leading to an escalation of the threat exchange, a motivation to retaliate, and increasing levels of punitive action (De Dreu, 1995). In line with this, other findings associate threat from the out-group with increased belligerence and support for retaliatory action aimed at reducing the level of perceived threat (Herman, Tetlock, & Visser, 1999). Further findings also link out-group threat with decreased willingness to compromise or make concessions to the other side, which is perceived as having negative intentions toward one's own side and therefore as untrustworthy (Gordon & Arian, 2001; Maoz & McCauley, 2005). Promises, meanwhile, have been found to elicit favorable responses toward their communicators and to increase cooperation, liking, and trust (De Dreu, 1995; Rubin & Brown, 1975). Based on this literature, a concession proposal can be expected to garner more support when framed as promise appeal as opposed to a threat appeal.

This literature also leads us to expect that the underlying mechanism through which the frame of threat or promise influences compromise support will be the extent to which the proposal is seen as trustworthy, so that a proposal framed as a promise will be perceived as more trustworthy than one framed as a threat and thus gain more support. Hence we also present below a mediation hypothesis (2A). Mediation exists when a predictor (X) affects a dependent variable (Y) indirectly through an intervening variable, or mediator (M) (Hayes, 2009). According to our mediation hypotheses (see also the alternative mediation hypothesis 2B), the news framing of the proposal (X) influences respondents' support (Y) through the mediator, the perceived trustworthiness of the proposal (M).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1A. A press-reported proposal for a compromise-based peace made by one's opponents in conflict and framed in a news report as a threat will be perceived as less trustworthy and will elicit lower support on one's own side in comparison to an identical proposal that is framed as a promise.

Hypothesis 2A. The perceived trustworthiness of the press-reported peace proposal will mediate the association between the news framing of the peace proposal and support for the proposal.

Yet there is also evidence suggesting that in a context of prolonged, intractable conflict such as the Israeli–Arab conflict, threat frames may be actually more persuasive than promise frames. According to the deterrence model (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981), threats from the opponent can act as effective deterrents, eliciting fear of the opponent’s retaliation and coercive action in case of noncompliance and emphasizing the price to be paid for noncooperation. In this view, threat from the out-group can increase the tendency toward compliance and concession making (De Dreu, 1995). Threats can also elicit more compliance than promises because the latter are more ambiguous about the exact consequences of noncompliance. Especially in lengthy, refractory conflicts such as the Israeli–Arab one—situations of uncertainty and high risk characterized by low trust in the benign intentions of the opponent (Yagamishi & Yagamishi, 1994; Yuki, Maddux, Brewer, & Takemura, 2007)—opponents’ promises may be judged low in trustworthiness and may thus be of low persuasiveness. Based on this literature, a concession proposal can be expected to receive more support when framed as an appeal issued via a threat rather than a promise.

This literature also indicates that the underlying mechanism through which threats or promises framing influence compromise support will be the perceived extent of the proposal’s trustworthiness, so that a proposal framed as a threat is perceived as more trustworthy than one framed as a promise and thus gains more support.

Hypothesis 1B. A proposal for a compromise-based peace made by one’s opponents in conflict and framed as a threat in a news report will be perceived as more trustworthy and elicit higher support in comparison to an identical proposal framed as a promise.

Hypothesis 2B. The perceived trustworthiness of the press-reported peace proposal will mediate the association between the news framing of the peace proposal and support for the proposal.

Effects of Prior Beliefs

Framing effects are moderated or limited by various factors, including individuals’ prior beliefs and opinions (Chong & Druckman, 2007a). Specifically, effects of framing on attitudes to peace and concession making may also depend on the prior political attitudes of the partisan audience, as reflected in respondents’ affiliation with specific political parties on their side in the conflict and in their degree of initial support for peace.

Thus, another aim of our study was to gauge the extent to which the media framing manipulation will affect two groups of Jewish Israeli respondents exhibiting different a priori attitudes to peace based on compromise in the Israeli–Arab conflict: respondents with hawkish political attitudes and respondents with dovish political attitudes. In Israeli political life, the distinction between hawks and doves is a crucial marker used to organize beliefs regarding the Israeli–Arab conflict. Research consistently indicates that in comparison to doves, Jewish Israeli hawks exhibit less support for peace based on Israeli territorial concessions and more negative attitudes toward Arabs (Maoz & McCauley, 2005, 2008). Hawks’ a priori more negative attitudes to their opponents and to peace and concession making also tend to be rigid and resistant to change (Pruitt, 2007; Temkin, 1987). Indeed, previous research has indicated that in comparison to doves, hawks are less influenced by source characteristics when evaluating compromise

proposals in conflict (Maoz, 1999; Maoz, Ward, Katz, & Ross, 2002). In line with these previous results, we formulated a third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. The threat versus promise framing of the peace proposal will affect hawks' support for the proposal less than it will affect doves' support.

Overview

An experimental design was employed to empirically test our predictions. Jewish Israeli respondents were presented with a news report containing a proposal for Israeli–Arab peace tendered by Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah and other leaders of Arab League countries. Fashioned after similar news items that frequently appear in the Israeli press, the peace proposal contained an abbreviated version of the Arab Peace initiative first proposed in 2002 at the Beirut Summit of the Arab League by then Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and reendorsed by the same leader, now King Abdullah, and the Arab League on several occasions, including at the Riyadh Summit in 2007. This initiative calls for a comprehensive Israeli–Arab peace based on Israeli territorial concessions and agreement to the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state, and the Arab countries' declaration of the end of the conflict and establishment of full normal relations with Israel. Following the peace proposal was a statement King Abdullah and the Arab League states' leaders (allegedly) made in support of Israel's accepting this proposal. Two experimental studies were conducted to test our hypotheses.

Study 1

In Study 1's threat-framing experimental condition, the statement conveyed threat by claiming that if Israel ignored the proposal, some of the Arab countries would be left with no option but cooperating with Iran in a war against Israel. In the promise-framing experimental condition, the statement conveyed a promise by claiming that Israel's acceptance of the peace proposal would enable all sides involved to build a peaceful and secure future in which stability and prosperity would prevail.

Methods

Participants

A total of 92 Jewish Israeli undergraduate social science students (46 females) participated in the study for partial course credit. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the news framings of the concession appeal conditions (threat vs. promise). After 14 respondents who could not be clearly classified as hawks or doves (see classification procedure below) were excluded from the analysis, the experimental sample consisted of 78 respondents (41 females).

Procedure

Respondents were exposed to the news report, which was presented to them as a recent front-page item from a major newspaper in Israel. The report contained a compromise-based peace proposal

described as recently presented by Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah and the other leaders of the Arab League countries. Following the proposal was a statement (allegedly) made by King Abdullah and the other Arab League leaders in support of Israel's acceptance of the peace proposal.

In the threat-framing experimental condition, respondents ($n = 40$, 20 hawks and 20 doves) were presented with a statement conveying threat by claiming that Israel's disregarding the peace proposal could leave some Arab states with no option but war against Israel in cooperation with Iran:

The Arab League Leaders call the Israeli government and all the Israelis to accept the above initiative, so to secure the opportunities for peace and to stop the bloodshed. Israel ignoring this proposal might leave part of the Arab states with no other option than war against Israel in cooperation with Iran.

In the promise-framing experimental condition, respondents ($n = 38$, 19 hawks and 19 doves) read a statement conveying promise by claiming that Israelis' acceptance of the peace proposal would allow the building of a peaceful and secure future for all sides involved, where stability and prosperity would prevail: "The Arab League Leaders call the Israeli government and all the Israelis to accept the above initiative, so to secure the opportunities for peace and to stop the bloodshed and so to enable Israel and the Arab states to live peacefully side by side and to guarantee future generations a secure future in which prosperity and stability will prevail."

After reading the news report, participants completed the research questionnaire, which included the following measures:

1. Manipulation check. On a 7-point scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "extremely" (7), respondents indicated the extent to which the statement supporting Israel's accepting the proposal was threatening and the extent to which the statement conveyed a positive tone.

2. Support for Compromise Proposal scale. A three-item scale, with each item rated on a 7-point scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "extremely" (7), measured respondents' support for the compromise proposal. The scale contained an item measuring respondents' evaluation of the proposal as beneficial for Israel, an item measuring the extent to which respondents supported the proposal, and an item measuring the extent to which respondents saw the proposal as fair to both sides (Cronbach's alpha = .95).

3. Proposal Trustworthiness scale. A three-item scale, with each item rated on a 7-point scale as described above, measured respondents' ratings of the proposal as trustworthy. The three items of the scale measured respondents' perceptions of the proposal as trustworthy, perceptions of the proposal as honest, and perceptions of the extent to which Arabs could be relied on to play their role in the proposed peace agreement (Cronbach's alpha = .92).

4. Hawk–Dove measure. Respondents also completed a self-classification as hawks or doves on a 7-point scale, where 1 meant “strongly agree with hawkish positions in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict” and 7 meant “strongly agree with dovish positions in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.” Respondents were classified as hawks if they rated 1–3 on this scale and as doves if they rated 5–7. Respondents that did not meet either of these conditions were excluded from the experimental sample.

Half the respondents received the hawk–dove scale before reading the peace proposal and filling out the research questionnaire, and for the remaining half this order was reversed.¹

Debriefing

Once the questionnaire was completed, the participants were asked for their opinion about the study, their impression of the compromise proposal, and how they felt while filling in the questionnaire. Following this, the objective and the nature of the experiment were explained to the participants.

Results

Manipulation Check

The manipulation check confirmed that respondents in the threat news-framing condition perceived the statement made by the Arab leaders as more threatening ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 2.2$) than did respondents in the promise news-framing condition ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.64$, $t(76) = -2.99$, $p < .004$). In addition, our manipulation check confirmed that respondents in the promise news-framing condition perceived the tone conveyed in the Arab leaders’ statement as more positive ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 2.05$) compared to the way respondents in the threat news-framing condition evaluated the statement’s tone ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.75$, $t(76) = 2.92$, $p < .005$).

Effects of the Experimental Manipulations

To assess the effect of the experimental manipulations, respondents’ ratings of the press-reported proposal for peace based on compromise were subjected to a two-way analysis of variance, where the news framing of the proposal (threat or promise) and respondents’ political affiliation (hawk or dove) were tested between respondents (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations of experimental variables).

¹ Statistical analyses indicated that the order of measures did not significantly affect their ratings ($t < 1$ in all cases).

Table 1. Means (and Standard Deviations) of Measures.

| | Experimental Condition | Ex. Condition | Ex. Condition | Ex. Condition |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Measure | Threat Frame– Doves | Promise Frame– Doves | Threat Frame– Hawks | Promise Frame– Hawks |
| Proposal Trustworthiness Scale | 4.85 ^{a* b**} (1.06) | 3.84 ^{b**} (1.36) | 2.07 (1.26) | 1.78 (1.15) |
| Support for Peace Proposal Scale | 5.35 ^{a** b**} (.99) | 4.16 ^{b**} (1.71) | 2.15 (1.44) | 2.28 (1.38) |

Note. ^{a*} $p < .05$. ^{a**} $p < .01$ (*t*-test comparison with the Promise Frame experimental condition for same political affiliation group). ^{b*} $p < .05$. ^{b**} $p < .01$ (*t*-test comparison with same experimental condition for hawks).

In line with Hypotheses 1, we found news framing of the peace proposal had a marginally significant effect on Jewish Israeli respondents' ratings of their support for the proposal, $F(1, 74) = 3.07$, $p < .084$, and a significant effect on respondents' ratings of the compromise proposal as trustworthy, $F(1, 74) = 5.48$, $p < .022$. In line with Hypothesis 1B, Table 1 indicates that when the news report framed the peace proposal as a threatening appeal made by Arab leaders, Jewish Israelis expressed more support for it and perceived it as more trustworthy in comparison to respondents who read the same proposal framed as a promise appeal.

In addition, respondents' prior hawkish or dovish political attitudes had a significant effect on their ratings of their support for the peace proposal, $F(1, 74) = 65.14$, $p < .001$, and of the proposal as trustworthy, $F(1, 74) = 77.64$, $p < .001$. Consistent with previous definitions of hawks and doves (Maoz & McCauley, 2005), the data in Table 1 indicate that compared to hawks, doves expressed higher support for the peace proposal and perceived it as more trustworthy.

In line with Hypothesis 3, the effect of news framing on respondents' support for the peace proposal was moderated by respondents' political affiliation, $F(1, 74) = 3.99$, $p < .05$. Table 1 illustrates that, as expected, the news framing of the peace proposal had a larger effect on dovish respondents'

ratings of their support for the proposal, $t(37) = 2.67$, $p < .01$, than on hawkish respondents' ratings, $t(37) < 1$, *ns*. Respondents' prior hawkish or dovish political attitudes did not significantly moderate the effect of news framing on their ratings of the proposal as trustworthy, $F(1, 74) = 1.77$, $p = .187$. However, the data in Table 1 show that the news framing had a bigger effect on dovish respondents' ratings of the proposal as trustworthy, $t(37) = 2.59$, $p < .014$, than on hawkish respondents' ratings, $t(37) < 1$, *ns*.

Mediation Analysis

We also tested the extent to which perception of the proposal for compromise-based peace as trustworthy mediated—for the dovish Jewish Israeli respondents—the association between the news framing of the proposal and respondents' support for the proposal using the mediation model suggested by Hayes (2009). In line with Hypothesis 2B, we found the proposals' perceived trustworthiness was a significant mediator of the association between the news framing of the proposal as a threat or a promise and respondents' support for the peace proposal, $Z = 2.45$, $p = .01$, mediation effect coefficient = .847, $SE = .347$, $CI [.0657, 1.6377]$. The comparison of the zero-order correlations between the predictor and the outcome variable to the associations between the same variables after entering a mediator into the model (Baron & Kenny, 1986) was consistent with our findings regarding mediation. Specifically, among our dovish respondents the zero-order correlation between the predictor and the outcome variable was significant ($r = .46$). However, the direct link between the news framing of the peace proposal and respondents' support for the proposal became insignificant ($beta = .12$, *ns*) when the proposal's trustworthiness was entered as a mediator ($beta = .73$), indicating that the proposal's perceived trustworthiness mediates a large part of the association of the news framing of the peace proposal with respondents' support for the proposal.

Finally, we also tested proposal trustworthiness as an interactive variable moderating the association between the news framing of the proposal and respondents' support for the proposal. Druckman's (2001b) work demonstrated that trust can serve as a moderator in framing effects. In a related earlier study, Miller and Krosnick (2000) demonstrated that source trustworthiness moderates media priming. However, as our analysis showed, the effect that the interaction between the type of frame (promise or threat) and proposal trustworthiness had on support for the compromise proposal was insignificant ($p = ns$).

Study 2

Study 2 aimed to replicate the results of Study 1, using a more symmetrically worded framing manipulation. The psychological approach to framing assumes that the given information remains constant across conditions with subtle variations in the way the information is presented (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). In Study 1 the threat condition stated that continued Israeli disregard for the peace proposal might leave some Arab states with no option but war against Israel in cooperation with Iran, while the promise condition stated that Israeli acceptance of the peace proposal would enable the building of a safer future in which there would be stability and prosperity for all sides involved. While this type of issue or

emphasis framing manipulation focused on qualitatively different yet potentially relevant considerations (Chong & Druckman, 2007b, p. 114) is predominant in political communication literature, the two framing conditions presented in Study 1 are neither highly symmetrical nor equivalent in the information they convey. Thus, to strengthen the generalizability of the results from Study 1, another study was conducted. It employed the same design and measures as Study 1, but used a differently worded—more symmetrical or equivalent—threat and promise framing manipulation. More specifically, the promise condition in Study 2 stated that Israeli acceptance of the peace proposal would lead to security, stability, and prosperity, while the threat condition stated that Israel's continuing to ignore the proposal would lead to insecurity, instability, and lack of prosperity.

Methods

Participants

A total of 88 Jewish Israeli undergraduate social science students (36 females) who had not taken part in Study 1 participated in this study for partial course credit. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the news framings of the concession appeal conditions (threat vs. promise). After eight respondents that could not be clearly classified as hawks or as doves (see classification procedure below) were excluded from the analysis, the experimental sample numbered 80 respondents (32 females).

Procedure

Israeli respondents were presented with a news report containing a proposal for Israeli-Arab peace offered by Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah and by the other leaders of the Arab League countries (as in Study 1 above). Following the peace proposal was a statement (allegedly) made by King Abdullah and the Arab League states' leaders in support of Israel's accepting the proposal. In the promise-framing experimental condition, respondents ($n = 40$, 20 hawks and 20 doves) read a statement that conveyed a promise by claiming that Israeli acceptance of the peace proposal would lead to security, stability and prosperity:

The Arab League Leaders call the Israeli government and all the Israelis to accept the above initiative, so to secure the opportunities for peace and to stop the bloodshed. Israeli acceptance of this proposal will clearly lead to significant security, prosperity and stability in Israeli-Arab relations.

In the threat-framing experimental condition, respondents ($n = 40$, 23 hawks and 17 doves) were presented with a statement conveying a threat, claiming that Israel's continuing disregard of the proposal would lead to insecurity, instability, and lack of prosperity: "The Arab League Leaders call the Israeli government and all the Israelis to accept the above initiative, so to secure the opportunities for peace and to stop the bloodshed. Israel's ignoring this proposal will clearly lead to significant lack of security, lack of prosperity and lack of stability in Israeli-Arab relations." After reading the news report, participants completed research questionnaires that included the same measures as in Study 1 (see

above): Manipulation check, Support for Compromise scale (Study 2 Cronbach's alpha = .92), Proposal Trustworthiness scale (Study 2 Cronbach's alpha = .89), and the Hawk-Dove measure.

Debriefing

Once the questionnaire was completed, the participants were asked about their opinion about the study, their impression of the compromise proposal, and their feelings while filling in the questionnaire. Following this, the objective and the nature of the experiment were explained to the participants.

Results

Manipulation Check

The manipulation check confirmed that respondents in the threat-framing condition perceived the Arab leaders' statement as more threatening ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 2.05$) than did respondents in the promise news-framing condition ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.57$, $t(78) = -1.41$, $p = .017$). In addition, our manipulation check confirmed that respondents in the promise news-framing condition perceived the tone conveyed in the Arab leaders' statement as more positive ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.78$) compared to the way respondents in the threat news-framing condition perceived the statement's tone ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.92$, $t(78) = 2.17$, $p = .033$).

Effects of the Experimental Manipulations

To assess the effect of the experimental manipulations, respondents' ratings of the press-reported proposal for compromise-based peace were subjected to a two-way analysis of variance, where the news framing of the proposal (threat or promise) and respondents' political affiliation (hawk or dove) were tested between respondents (see Table 2 for descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations of experimental variables).

Table 2. Means (and Standard Deviations) of Measures.

| Measure | Experimental Condition Threat Frame– Doves | Ex. Condition Promise Frame– Doves | Ex. Condition Threat Frame– Hawks | Ex. Condition Promise Frame– Hawks |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Proposal Trustworthiness Scale | 4.43 ^{a*} , ^{b**} (1.31) | 3.57 ^{b**} (1.19) | 2.64 ^{a*} (1.31) | 1.92 (.98) |
| Support for Peace Proposal Scale | 5.27 ^{a**} , ^{b**} (1.09) | 4.08 ^{b**} (1.48) | 2.86 (1.34) | 2.17 (1.09) |

Note. ^{a*} $p < .05$. ^{a**} $p < .01$ (t -test comparison with the Promise Frame Experimental condition for same political affiliation group). ^{b*} $p < .05$. ^{b**} $p < .01$ (t -test comparison with same experimental condition for hawks).

In line with Hypotheses 1, we found that the news framing of the peace proposal had a significant effect on Jewish Israeli respondents' ratings of their support for the compromise proposal, $F(1, 76) = 10.79$, $p < .002$, and a significant effect on respondents' ratings of the proposal as trustworthy, $F(1, 76) = 8.52$, $p < .005$. Table 2 indicates that, in line with hypotheses 1B, when the news report framed the peace proposal as a threatening appeal by Arab leaders, Jewish Israelis expressed more support for the proposal and perceived it as more trustworthy in comparison to respondents' ratings of the same proposal framed as a promise.

In addition, respondents' prior hawkish or dovish political attitudes had a significant effect on their ratings of their support for the peace proposal, $F(1, 76) = 57.43$, $p < .001$, and of the proposal's trustworthiness, $F(1, 76) = 40.20$, $p < .001$. Consistent with previous definitions of hawks and doves (Maoz, 2005), the data in Table 2 indicate that as compared to hawks, doves expressed more support for the peace proposal and perceived it as more trustworthy.

Respondents' prior hawkish or dovish political attitudes did not significantly moderate the effect of news framing on their support for the proposal, $F(1, 76) = .772$, $p = .382$. However, and in line with our expectations in Hypothesis 3, the Table 2 data illustrate that, as expected, the news framing had a greater effect on dovish support for the proposal, $t(35) = 2.74$, $p < .01$, than on hawkish respondents' ratings, $t(41) = 1.83$, $p < .07$. Respondents' prior hawkish or dovish political attitudes did not moderate the effect of news framing on respondents' ratings of the proposal as trustworthy $F(1, 76) = .07$, $p = .79$. The data in Table 2 show that the news framing had a significant effect on the proposal's trustworthiness

ratings by both dovish respondents, $t(35) = 2.09, p < .043$, and hawkish respondents, $t(41) = 2.01, p < .046$.

Mediation Analysis

Using the mediation model suggested by Hayes (2009), we also tested the extent to which perception of the compromise-based peace proposal as trustworthy mediated the association between the news framing of the proposal and respondents' support for it. In line with Hypothesis 2B, the proposals' perceived trustworthiness was found to be a significant mediator of the association between the news framing of the proposal as threat or a promise and respondents' support for the peace proposal, $Z = 1.975, p = .05$, mediation effect coefficient = .571, $SE = .289$, CI [.0296, 1.1507].

Discussion

News framing is recognized as a central mechanism in political communication, affecting audiences' attitudes, opinions, and preferences. Our study sought to examine the extent to which news framing can also affect the attitudes that partisans embroiled in long-term, intractable conflict hold toward peace based on compromise. Opinions of parties to a conflict generally tend to be deeply entrenched and resistant to change (Bar-Tal, 2000, 2001). However, our findings indicate that variations in news framing can change these attitudes and increase support for peace, even in the context of an stubbornly ongoing conflict such as the Israeli-Arab one.

More specifically, the findings show that a compromise-based peace proposal, when tendered by the opposing side in an intractable, protracted conflict and framed in a news report as a threat issued by the opponent, receives higher support and is perceived as more trustworthy than an identical proposal framed as a promise. Importantly, carrying out two studies using different types of threat versus promise framing manipulations resulted in replication of these findings.

These findings are of innovative value. Despite the significant role threats and promises play in the dynamics of the negotiation process, the ways in which threat and promise appeals issued by opponents in conflict and conveyed through the print media affect support for peace have not yet been systematically studied.

Threats, Promises, and Support for Peace through Compromise

Threats and promises are major strategies conflicting sides employ with the intention of influencing one another's behavior. A threat is a "warning" that punishment is contingent upon the other's behavior; conversely a promise offers a contingent reward (Schelling, 1960). Thus threat appeals to the other party's fear of punishment and relies upon deterrents, whereas promise appeals to the other side's desire to obtain rewards and relies upon incentives. Interestingly, our findings contradict the predictions derived from the conflict spiral theory, according to which messages of threat conveyed by the opponent should lead to communication of counterthreats and ultimately to escalation of conflict (De Dreu, 1995;

Jervis, 1976). Our findings indicate that in line with the deterrence model (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981), at least under certain conditions (that need to be clarified in future research), exposure to a threat made by an opponent in conflict and conveyed through the print media can result in a stronger tendency for concession making.

The distinction between prospective, contingent losses and gains presented by threats and promises, respectively, may help explain the stronger effect of an opponent's threat-framed peace proposal (as compared to a promise-framed peace proposal) on support for this proposal. According to prospect theory, people are more sensitive to prospective losses than to prospective gains (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981), so negative outcomes are assigned a higher psychological weight than positive ones (Druckman & McDermott, 2008, p. 317). In the context of the present study, it may be that our Jewish Israeli respondents viewed the prospect of future contingent losses—that is, the threat of Arab states going to war against Israel if Israel did *not* accept the proposed concession—as more likely than future contingent gains such as the promise of a secure future of peace and prosperity to all involved parties if Israel *did* accept the proposed concession.

This asymmetry between threat and promise framing has important implications for rhetorical strategies used by opponents in conflict as they attempt to sway the other side toward accepting proposed compromise solutions. To effectively influence the hearts and minds of both leaders and the public from the opponents' side in conflict, political actors may take advantage of their opponents' loss aversion (Jerit, 2009) and, via the news media, convey messages framed as threats that emphasize the negative consequences of the opponents' not accepting the communicators' preferred policies and solutions in conflict. Future research should further clarify the underlying mechanisms that explain the stronger attitudinal effect of threat frames conveyed through the media and map the conditions in which this persuasive advantage of threats over promises apply.

Trustworthiness as a Mediator

Interestingly, while most existing studies examine the direct effect the framing of compromise proposals has on support for compromise, the present study indicates that the effect of framing on compromise support is mediated by the perceived trustworthiness of the proposal. Thus, this study offers an important integration between two bodies of research: one demonstrating the importance of trust and trustworthiness in framing effects (Druckman, 2001b; Miller & Krosnick, 2000; Scheufele, 1999), and the other showing the significant role trust plays in high-risk, low-certainty situations such as intractable, protracted conflicts (Yagamishi & Yagamishi, 1994; Yuki et al., 2007). By offering this integration, this study contributes significantly to the further understanding of framing effects in situations of protracted conflict. Future research should also continue to examine the role of trustworthiness as an underlying mechanism mediating the effect of framing on compromise support. Scheufele (1999) discusses the importance of communicator trustworthiness in affecting attitudes to relayed messages. In line with this, future research should attempt to examine the extent to which threat frames also affect compromise support by increasing source trustworthiness.

Prior Political Beliefs as Moderators of Framing Effects

We also found, in line with our expectations, that the effect of the frame of the press-reported peace proposal—be it threat or promise—on support for compromise-based peace was stronger among Jewish Israeli respondents with dovish prior political attitudes than among hawkish respondents.

These findings are consistent with findings of previous studies showing that individuals' prior opinions and values often moderate and limit framing effects (Chong & Druckman, 2007a). In the specific context of the Israeli–Arab conflict, previous research has shown that presenting a compromise proposal as an offering by one's opponent decreases the value of that compromise among doves, but has less influence on the evaluation of the compromise among hawks (Maoz et al. 2002). Expanding on these findings, the present study finds that also presenting an informational cue to the intentions of the compromise proposal's source, a cue that carries a strong negative valence and thus may have a more powerful effect on attitudes and evaluations (Bizer & Petty, 2005; Lau, 1985; Wyer & Srull, 1981)—or in other words, framing an appeal to concede in conflict as a *threat* made by the opponent—increases willingness to concede among respondents with prior dovish political attitudes, but has a smaller influence on hawks' willingness to concede.

Study Limitations

Despite the significance of its findings, this study has some limitations. First, the effects described in this study might be contingent—at least to some extent—on the nature of the promise and the extremity or severity of the threat presented by the Arab leaders. It is important thus to note that while the threats were perceived as more trustworthy in our two experiments, the current data do not enable us to completely rule out the possibility that sometimes, in other cases and with other wording, promises may be more trustworthy than threats. Further studies should thus test more specifically the effects of different types of threat and promises opponents make, so as to enable a more extensive generalization on the relative effect of these two strategies. Second, these studies were conducted with university students only. To increase the external validity of the findings, we recommend that additional studies examine the effects of threats and promises on more representative population samples from countries in conflict.

Concession Framing and News Framing Effects

Despite these limitations, the importance of our findings on the broader level lies in empirically demonstrating that the way the news media frame concession proposals in conflict can significantly influence public attitudes to the concessions. Effects of news framing have been shown to shape how readers and viewers interpret specific issues or events (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997), attributions of responsibility (Iyengar, 1991), and evaluations of political actions (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). The present study ties news-framing effects more closely to conflict and conflict resolution, showing how the framing of a peace proposal in a news report can significantly influence audience response to the proposal. However, it is important to also note here that the threat or promise framings of concession proposals are invoked not only by journalists but also by the leaders journalists cite, therefore exemplifying the politics-

media-politics (PMP) model of influence (Wolfsfeld, 2002, 2004), which gives precedence to political leaders as the initial and most important source of influence.

Several research programs have examined news framing and news coverage in the context of the Israeli–Arab conflict, studying the processes underlying the involvement, production, and construction of news frames; the contents of frames; competition between news frames; and the dynamics and factors that make certain frames dominant or hegemonic in conflict (Liebes & Kampf, 2009; Sheafer & Gabay, 2009; Wolfsfeld, 2002, 2004) as well as using correlational survey data to empirically evaluate how the media framing of a peace process affects public opinion in support of peace (Sheafer & Dvir-Gvirsman, 2010). The present research completes and continues these studies by experimentally examining the effects of news frames on audiences in the Israeli–Arab conflict and by assessing the relative effectiveness of different news frames in increasing support for peace based on a compromise including a more egalitarian division of resources between the sides. The few previous experimental studies that examined the effects of framing on compromise support in an actual protracted political conflict mostly focused on the effects of the source offering the proposal. The present investigation embarked on another innovative path and experimentally investigated the effects of different types of frames—as they relate to the sides’ argumentation in favor of compromise in conflict—on agreement to making concessions. Parties involved in conflict have deeply entrenched attitudes and opinions that are resistant to change. Moreover, partisans in conflict have consistently been found to almost automatically reject or devalue compromise proposals originating from or supported by their opponents. By demonstrating that certain frames of argumentation can increase support for compromise in actual conflict, even when the opponent is the source of the compromise proposal (and of the argumentation), our findings therefore meaningfully extend the theoretical and practical knowledge of the effects of framing in realistic situations of protracted conflict.

In line with suggestions recently made by Scheufele and Iyengar (in press), future research should also expand the present paradigm by using nonverbal, visual cues to examine the effect of news framing on political attitudes in conflict. Visual information demonstrably has impressive effects on voters’ political attitudes and preferences (Bailenson, Iyengar, & Yee, 2008; Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005). A recent study, that is highly relevant to the present investigation described in Scheufele and Iyengar (in press), Iyengar and his colleagues manipulated visual cues to examine the effects of framing on eliciting group-based racial stereotypes that were expected to affect attitudes to political candidates. After showing voters relatively light- and dark-skinned images of Senator Obama, the researchers found that, in line with their expectations, in the early stage of the campaign, whites’ evaluations of Obama were significantly affected by skin complexion, so that darker skinned images received lower evaluations. In a similar vein, future research might use visual cues regarding the racial, ethnic, or gender identity of the opponent proposing peace as an additional paradigm for assessing the effects of news framing on eliciting group-based stereotypic perceptions and transforming political attitudes in protracted asymmetrical ethno-political conflict.

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