

## Research article

# When ideology matters: Moral conviction and the association between ideology and policy preferences in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict

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### Abstract

*Do people's policy preferences toward outgroups in intractable conflict consistently correspond with political ideology? To what extent are policy-related cleavages between the political right and left in such contexts fueled by moral conviction and emotions? Analyses of a survey of Jewish-Israelis (N = 119) conducted immediately after a war between Israelis and Palestinians revealed little to no ideological differences in acceptance of "collateral damage," support for retribution, or support for compromise when positions about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict were devoid of moral fervor. Those on the left and right endorsed polarized policy preferences only when their positions about the conflict were held with moral conviction. Presence or absence of guilt about harm to Palestinians mediated the effects of moral conviction on policy preferences in this context. Copyright © 2013 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

The idea that policy preferences should be strongly associated with political ideology may seem intuitive, so much so that the former is often considered an indication of the latter (e.g., Halperin, 2011). However, the relationship between political ideology and ideologically consistent policy preferences is often surprisingly weak and inconsistent (Converse, 1964; Judd & Krosnick, 1989; Zaller, 1992). Contending with this largely counterintuitive finding, researchers have worked to identify factors that increase the strength of the connection between policy preferences, on the one hand, and political ideology, on the other. Most of this effort has focused on structural and cognitive moderators, such as political expertise, political engagement, and media coverage (e.g., Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Dancey & Goren, 2010; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Luskin, 2002; Zaller, 1992).

More recently, however, researchers have begun to consider motivational moderators for the correspondence between ideology and policy preferences (e.g., Federico, 2007; Federico & Schneider, 2007). For example, a higher need to evaluate (i.e., the motivation to identify attitude objects as either "good" or "bad") is associated with higher ideology–policy preference correspondence. There are some important distinctions, however, between evaluations (which usually reflect matters of preference or taste) and people's moral convictions (which reflect beliefs about fundamental right and wrong; e.g., Skitka, 2010). We expected that moral conviction would strengthen the correspondence between one's ideological leanings and policy preferences, especially in the context of intractable conflict—a morally and emotionally charged context (Coleman, Vallacher, Nowak, & Bui-Wrzosinska, 2007; Deutsch, 2000). Specifically, we hypothesized that

holding attitudes about the conflict with moral fervor would strengthen the association between one's ideological self-placement and ideologically consistent policy preferences, resulting in increased polarization between the political left and right. We further hypothesized that such consistency would be mediated by moral emotion.

### Moral Conviction

Moral conviction reflects the extent to which a person experiences subjective evaluations of an attitude target in terms of fundamental right and wrong (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005). Attitudes vested with moral conviction ("moral mandates") are a special class of strong attitudes (i.e., attitudes that are extreme, important, central, and certain; Krosnick & Petty, 1995) that are distinct from otherwise strong but non-moral attitudes (Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2008). A growing body of research has demonstrated the important role that moral conviction plays in the political domain: moral conviction increases intentions to vote and actual voting behavior; reduces trust in authorities, even likeminded ones, as well as trust in politically agreed upon conflict resolution processes; reduces the facility and even likelihood of reaching agreement on conflict resolution processes with others who do not share one's positions; and increases intolerance, prejudice, and social distance from attitudinally dissimilar others (for a review, see Skitka, 2010).

One specific example of moral conviction's predictive power is especially germane to the goals of the current research. Skitka and Bauman (2008) tested whether people's strength of moral conviction about either candidates or various

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hot-button political issues predicted voting intentions and behavior in the 2004 and 2008 US Presidential elections. Analyses yielded consistent results across both elections: stronger moral conviction was associated with stronger voting intentions and actual turnout at the polls (see also Morgan, Skitka, & Wisneski, 2010). Equally interesting was the finding that moral conviction was an equal-opportunity motivator of voting behavior for the political right and left (Morgan et al., 2010; Skitka & Bauman, 2008). These results suggest that correspondence between political beliefs and actions is higher when one is morally rather than non-morally motivated. The action in election contexts, however, is identical for those on the political right and left: voting. In other contexts, ideological differences may be associated with quite different policy preferences and actions. In the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, for example, the political right generally prefers an offensive and militaristic response to conflict, whereas the political left seeks diplomatic and negotiated solutions. In this context, then, one would predict that stronger moral investments in the conflict should be associated with greater ideological polarization in policy preferences and behavior. We therefore predict that stronger moral convictions will moderate Israelis' policy preferences in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. That is, there should be stronger effects of political ideology on policy preferences when these preferences are not merely strong but are also held with strong rather than weak moral conviction.

### **Morality and Political Ideology in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict**

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is an exemplar of intractable conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998). The term “intractable conflict” refers to intergroup strife—characteristically persistent, highly destructive, and resistant to resolution—between identity groups such as nations, ethnicities, and religious or linguistic groups (Bar-Tal, 2007; Kriesberg, 2007). Importantly, parties often understand such conflicts in moral terms (Coleman et al., 2007; Deutsch, 2000).

Furthermore, ideology plays an important role among Israelis in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict—the bipolar distinction between “left” and “right” is a strong one commonly understood by the general public (Diskin, 1999; Hazan, 2007). Specifically, support for compromises with Palestinians and other diplomatic (i.e., dovish) positions are often attributed to the political left, whereas higher tolerance for “collateral damage” and other hardline (i.e., hawkish) positions are often attributed to the political right—so much so that hawk and right, on the one hand, and dove and left, on the other, are often used synonymously in the Israeli context (Diskin, 1999; Hazan, 2007).<sup>1</sup>

By considering the moral undertones of the intractable conflict (Coleman et al., 2007; Deutsch, 2000), and the highly

ideological polity in Israel (Arian & Shamir, 1983), the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is a conducive setting for testing the hypothesis that high moral conviction will be associated with a stronger correspondence between ideology and policy preferences in the context of intractable conflict.

### **The Mediating Role of Moral Emotions**

Emotions have been found to partially or fully mediate the effects of moral convictions on policy-relevant outcomes (e.g., Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Skitka & Wisneski, 2011). In addition, intergroup policy preferences are often predicted by group-based emotions (e.g., Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007; Small, Lerner, & Fischhoff, 2006). As such, we expect that emotions—particularly moral emotions—will mediate the conditional relationship between ideology and policy preferences. More specifically, we expect guilt and anger to be meaningful mediators in the relation between ideology and intergroup policy preferences when moral conviction is high for the following reasons: (i) guilt and anger are central moral emotions in the context of conflict aroused in reaction to injustice or violation of moral codes (Breugelmans & De Cremer, 2007; Haidt, 2003); (b) guilt is associated with perceived responsibility for harms caused to others (e.g., Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003; Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994) and with concern for others' suffering (e.g., Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Miron, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2006; Tangney & Dearing, 2002), and influences policy preferences toward those harmed (e.g., Branscombe & Doosje, 2004; Čehajić, Effron, Halperin, Liberman, & Ross, 2011; Iyer et al., 2003); and (c) anger is associated with attribution of blame to an outgroup for a harm that is perceived as unjust or illegitimate (Halperin, Russel, Dweck, & Gross, 2011; Lazarus, 1991; Small et al., 2006), and influences policy preferences such as support for the use of military force or non-violent, diplomatic action toward outgroups (e.g., Cheung-Blunden & Blunden, 2008; Huddy et al., 2007; Reifen Tagar, Frederico, & Halperin, 2011; Skitka, Bauman, Aramovich, & Morgan, 2006). Therefore, we expect that any effects of moral conviction on the relation between ideology and policy preferences are mediated by guilt and anger in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

### **The Current Study**

Hypotheses were tested by collecting data from a sample of Israeli Jewish students shortly after the end of the “Gaza War” between Israelis and Palestinians (December 2009–January 2010). This war began after a half-year ceasefire between Israel and the Hamas movement ruling the Gaza Strip collapsed in December 2008, and missile attacks against civilian areas inside Israel intensified. Israel then launched a wide-scale offensive in the Gaza strip that led to about 1300 Palestinian casualties, 13 Israeli casualties, and mass destruction on the Palestinian side. Political issues related to this war were very high on the public agenda at the time of our data collection (Halperin & Gross, 2011).

Most immediate post-war public debate focused on the question of the legitimacy of Israel's harm of innocent Palestinian citizens, as well as potential compromises that

<sup>1</sup>Note that this is a distinct characteristic of ideological self-placement in the Israeli context. In the political context of the USA, in contrast, ideological self-placement on social and economic issues is a distinct construct with unique psychological antecedents, and the use of one dimension of ideology, ignoring the social–economic ideological distinction, may obfuscate meaningful results (Feldman & Johnston, 2013).

Israel should (or should not) consider to reconcile with the Palestinians after the war (Čehajić et al., 2011). In line with the traditional distribution of political positions in Israel (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Oren, 2010; Shamir & Arian, 1999), left-wingers expressed higher levels of support for negotiation and compromises with the Palestinians and raised doubts about the necessity of some of the militant actions conducted during the operation. Conversely, right-wingers justified Israeli actions during the war and emphasized the need for demonstrating that Israel will not tolerate aggression against its citizens.

## METHOD

### Participants and Procedure

One hundred and nineteen Jewish-Israeli undergraduates (55 men, 62 women, 2 unreported) completed the survey, ranging in age from 20 to 46 years ( $Mdn = 25.00$ ). Forty-three (36.13%) participants identified as leftists, 26 (21.85%) identified as centrists, and 49 (41.18%) identified as rightists. A majority of participants (59%) reported that they or someone close to them had served in the military in Gaza during or around Operation Cast Lead.

Participants completed the study at the end of their psychology class. The study was described as a survey about attitudes and emotions regarding Israeli society in the context of the recent war in Gaza.

### Measures

#### Political Ideology

Participants reported their ideology using a single item that assessed their subjective political position. Verbal anchors were *extreme left* (1) and *extreme right* (7), with a midpoint of *neither left nor right* (4). Recall that in the Israeli context, ideological self-placement is defined in terms of a unidimensional “dovish” versus “hawkish” stance with regard to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Diskin, 1999; Hazan, 2007).

#### Moral Conviction

The degree to which participants vested their position on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict with moral conviction was assessed with three items: “To what extent are your feelings about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions?” “To what extent are your feelings about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict deeply connected to your beliefs about ‘right’ and ‘wrong’?” and “To what extent are your attitudes about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict a reflection of your core moral values and convictions?” Participants responded on 7-point scales with the verbal anchors *not at all* (1) and *very much* (7). Participants’ scores were averaged to create a single moral conviction scale ( $\alpha = .71$ ), with higher scores reflecting greater moral conviction about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

#### Anger

Three items assessed participants’ degree of anger at Palestinians when thinking of harm to Israelis resulting from Palestinian violence stemming from Gaza: “To what extent do you feel anger toward Palestinians?” “To what extent do you feel hostility toward Palestinians?” and “To what extent do you feel rage toward Palestinians?” Participants responded on 7-point scales with the verbal anchors *not at all* (1) and *a great extent* (7). Participants’ responses were averaged to create a single scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ), with higher values reflecting greater anger.

#### Guilt

Three items assessed participants’ degree of guilt when thinking about Israeli military operations in Gaza: “To what extent do you feel remorse for the results of some of the military’s actions?” “To what extent do you feel guilt for the great harm caused to a weak population?” and “To what extent do you feel regret for the pain caused to Palestinians?” Participants responded on 7-point scales with the verbal anchors *not at all* (1) and *a great extent* (7). Participants’ responses were averaged to create a single scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ), with higher values reflecting greater guilt.

#### Tolerance for Collateral Damage

Three items assessed participants’ tolerance for “collateral damage”—tolerance of harm to Palestinian civilian bystanders in pursuit of Israeli military goals. In particular, participants indicated the maximum number of Palestinian civilian deaths that they would tolerate to neutralize a Palestinian missile site located on top of a civilian apartment building, a civilian hospital, and a civilian jail. For each scenario, participants responded by selecting one of five options: (i) *should bomb at any cost to civilian life*; (ii) *no more than 50 civilians killed*; (iii) *no more than 10 civilians killed*; (iv) *no more than 1 or 2 civilians killed*; or (v) *should not bomb*. Participants’ responses were reverse coded and averaged to create a single scale ( $\alpha = .92$ ), with higher scores reflecting greater tolerance for collateral damage.

#### Support for Retribution

Three items assessed participants’ support for retribution: “The nature of attacks on Israel calls for strong reaction to punish those responsible for them,” “Military strikes meant to punish are just as important as those meant to maintain Israeli national security,” and “The Palestinians must be punished for beastly crimes against humanity.” Participants responded on 7-point scales with the verbal anchors *strongly oppose* (1) and *strongly support* (7). Participants’ scores were averaged to create a single scale ( $\alpha = .66$ ), with higher scores reflecting greater support for retribution against Palestinians.

#### Support for Compromise

Willingness to compromise was measured by assessing participants’ support for the two state solution (i.e., establishment of

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of study variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	0.53	0.50	1.00								
2. Personal involvement	0.41	0.49	.10	1.00							
3. Attitude strength	5.19	1.49	-.16	-.02	1.00						
4. Ideology	4.00	1.33	.06	-.10	<b>.23*</b>	1.00					
5. Moral conviction	5.44	1.13	-.04	.10	<b>.24*</b>	.08	1.00				
6. Anger	5.32	1.44	.06	.05	.16	<b>-.29**</b>	.07	1.00			
7. Guilt	3.79	1.71	.09	.07	<b>-.24**</b>	<b>-.56***</b>	.04	<b>-.18*</b>	1.00		
8. Collateral damage	2.60	1.65	.03	-.05	.12	<b>.38***</b>	.03	.16	<b>-.46***</b>	1.00	
9. Desired for retribution	4.70	1.48	<b>.25**</b>	-.08	<b>.18<sup>†</sup></b>	<b>.42***</b>	.13	<b>.46***</b>	<b>-.36***</b>	<b>.42***</b>	1.00
10. Support for compromise	4.35	1.38	-.09	.03	-.13	<b>-.52***</b>	.06	<b>-.31**</b>	<b>.50***</b>	<b>-.44***</b>	<b>-.41***</b>

<sup>†</sup> $p < .08$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ , and \*\*\* $p < .001$ .  
Significant effects are noted in bold.

a Palestinian state beyond the 1967 borders), the division of Jerusalem (i.e., Arab areas in Jerusalem becoming the capital of a future Palestinian state), the recognition of the Palestinians as a people/nation, and the return of Palestinian refugees into Israeli territory. Participants responded on 7-point scales with the verbal anchors *high support* (1) and *low support* (7). Participants' responses were reverse coded and averaged to create a single scale ( $\alpha = .63$ ), with higher values reflecting greater support for compromise.

#### Control Variables

Participants reported their gender. Furthermore, participants reported their degree of attitude strength regarding the Israel–Palestinian conflict with the item “How strong is your position on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict?” on a 7-point scale with the verbal anchors *not at all* (1) and *very much* (7). Finally, participants indicated whether they or anyone close to them served in the military in Gaza during Operation Cast Lead (personal involvement).<sup>2</sup>

## RESULTS

See Table 1 for the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables.

### Does Moral Conviction Amplify Ideological Differences in Policy Preferences?

We hypothesized that moral conviction would moderate the association between ideology and policy preferences regarding the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, such that this association would be stronger for participants high rather than low in moral conviction. To test this hypothesis, we conducted three sets of hierarchical moderated regressions (Aiken & West, 1991) to predict tolerance of collateral damage, support for retribution against Palestinians, and support for compromise. In each of these analyses, gender, personal involvement,

<sup>2</sup>Participants also reported their age and the degree to which they vested their position on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict with religious conviction: “To what extent are your attitudes about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict closely connected to your religious beliefs?” Because neither variable affected the pattern of results reported, we omitted them from analyses.

attitude strength, ideology, and moral conviction were entered in the first step. We then added the interaction of ideology and moral conviction in the second step. All analyses also included the interactions of ideology with attitude strength.<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the ideology by attitude strength interaction was not significant. Following procedures recommended by Aiken and West (1991), we removed all interaction terms that were less than marginally significant (i.e.,  $> .08$ ) and refit the model including only significant interactions.

#### Tolerance for Collateral Damage

As can be seen in Table 2, greater identification with the political right predicted increased acceptance of collateral damage. This effect was qualified, however, by an interaction of ideology and moral conviction. Consistent with our hypothesis, analyses of simple slopes indicated that participants on the right and left did not differ in their acceptance of collateral damage when moral conviction was low,  $B = 0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ ,  $t(105) = 0.26$ ,  $p = .79$ , but participants on the right expressed greater acceptance of collateral damage than those on the left when moral conviction was high,  $B = 0.73$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ ,  $t(105) = 4.92$ ,  $p < .001$  (Figure 1).

#### Support for Retribution

Women and those on the right expressed stronger desires for retribution against Palestinians than men and those on the left, respectively (Table 2). Consistent with hypotheses, the effects of ideology on retribution were moderated by moral conviction. Analyses of simple slopes indicated that those on the right and left did not differ in their desires for retribution when moral conviction was low,  $B = 0.09$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ ,  $t(102) = 0.54$ ,  $p = .59$ . In contrast, those on the right expressed stronger desires for retribution than those on the left when moral conviction was high,  $B = 0.51$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $t(102) = 3.95$ ,  $p < .001$  (Figure 2).

<sup>3</sup>We also ran all following analyses using two other conceptualizations of attitude strength: (i) self-reported attitude importance and (ii) ideological extremity, which was derived by folding the ideology measure around its midpoint. All patterns of results were generally consistent with those presented herein. Attitude importance, however, has been argued to reflect moral conviction (Wright, Cullum, & Schwab, 2008), and the extremity measure necessitates using a dichotomized indicator of ideology. Self-reported attitude strength, therefore, is the most appropriate operationalization of the three for the purposes of this paper.



Table 2. Unstandardized betas for predictors of acceptance of collateral damage, desire for retribution, and support for compromise

		Acceptance of collateral damage	Desire for retribution	Support for compromise
Step 1	Gender	.03	<b>.65*</b>	-.09
	Personal involvement	-.06	-.26	-.06
	Attitude strength (Str)	.03	.13	-.06
	Ideology (Id)	<b>.47***</b>	<b>.42***</b>	<b>-.53***</b>
	Moral conviction	-.01	.15	.13
Step 2	Gender	.02	<b>.66**</b>	-.07
	Personal involvement	-.01	-.21	-.08
	Attitude strength (Str)	.07	<b>.18*</b>	-.10
	Ideology (Id)	<b>.39**</b>	<b>.30**</b>	<b>-.47***</b>
	Moral conviction (Mc)	-.09	.11	.18 <sup>†</sup>
	Id × Mc	<b>.30**</b>	<b>.19*</b>	<b>-.23**</b>
	Id × Str	-	<b>.13*</b>	-
$\Delta R^2$		<b>.05**</b>	<b>.07**</b>	<b>.05**</b>

<sup>†</sup> $p < .08$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; and \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Significant effects are noted in bold.

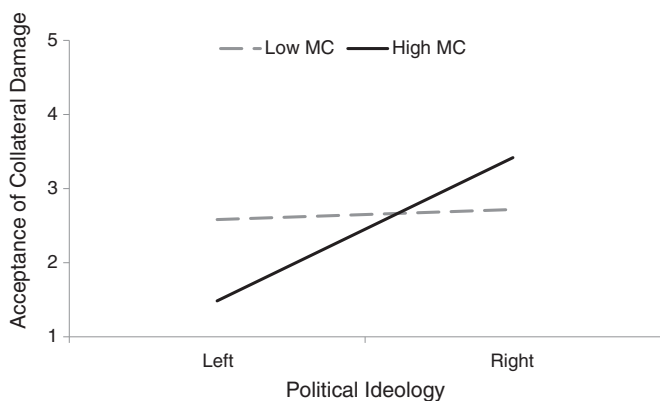


Figure 1. The interactive effects of ideology and moral conviction on acceptance of collateral damage. MC, moral conviction

### Support for Compromise

Greater identification with the political right predicted decreased support for compromise with Palestinians (Table 2). As predicted, this effect was qualified by an interaction of ideology and moral conviction. Analyses of simple slopes indicated that those on the right and left did not differ in their support for compromise with Palestinians when moral conviction was low,  $B = -0.21$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $t(106) = -1.50$ ,  $p = .14$ . However, those on the right expressed weaker support for compromise than those on the left when moral conviction was high,  $B = -0.73$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t(106) = -6.67$ ,  $p < .001$  (Figure 3).

### Alternative Moderation Model

Our primary hypothesis was that moral conviction would moderate the degree to which ideology predicts policy preferences. We also explored whether ideology moderated the effects of moral conviction on policy preferences, by separately testing the effects of moral conviction on policy preferences for those on the left and those on the right. Analyses of simple slopes indicated that increased moral conviction predicted decreased tolerance for collateral damage for participants on the left,  $B = -0.49$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ ,  $t(105) = -2.19$ ,  $p = .03$ , and marginally increased tolerance for collateral damage for participants on the right,  $B = 0.31$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $t(105) = 1.72$ ,  $p = .09$ . Moral conviction did not predict desires for retribution for participants

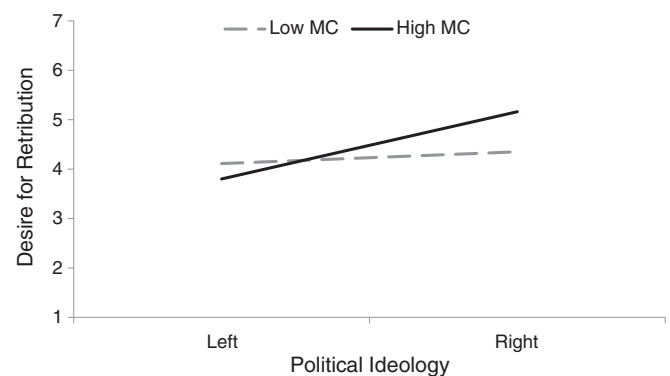


Figure 2. The interactive effects of ideology and moral conviction on support for retribution. MC, moral conviction

on the left,  $B = -0.14$ ,  $SE = 0.19$ ,  $t(102) = -0.76$ ,  $p = .45$ , but predicted increased desires for retribution for participants on the right,  $B = 0.36$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ ,  $t(102) = 2.48$ ,  $p = .02$ . Finally, increased moral conviction predicted increased support for compromise for those on the left,  $B = 0.49$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ ,  $t(106) = 3.06$ ,  $p = .00$ , but did not predict support for compromise for those on the right,  $B = -0.13$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $t(106) = -0.96$ ,  $p = .34$ . In short, results indicated that moral conviction polarized policy preferences; for each policy, those on the political right, the left, or both the left and right responded more extremely when moral conviction was high than when it was low.

### The Mediating Role of Emotions

To gain a greater understanding of the ways that moral conviction moderates ideological differences in policy preferences, we investigated the roles of two moral emotions: outgroup anger and ingroup guilt.

### Anger

To begin, we tested whether moral conviction moderated the association between ideology and anger, such that ideology would be more strongly associated with anger for participants high rather than low in moral conviction. To test this possibility, we conducted a moderated regression analysis to predict anger, using the same control variables listed in

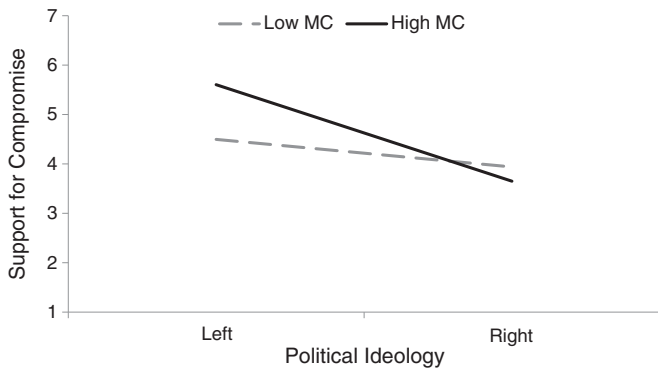


Figure 3. The interactive effects of ideology and moral conviction on support for compromise. MC, moral conviction

the aforementioned moderated regression analyses. As indicated earlier, the strength by ideology interaction was dropped from the analysis because it was non-significant.<sup>4</sup> As one can see in Table 3, greater identification with the political right predicted increased anger. Contrary to expectations, however, this effect was not qualified by an interaction of ideology and moral conviction. That is, the effects of ideology on anger did not significantly differ when moral conviction was low and when moral conviction was high. As such, differences in anger could not explain ideology's dissimilar effects on policy preferences at low and high moral conviction.

**Guilt**

Next, we tested whether moral conviction moderated the association between ideology and guilt. That is, we tested whether ideology was more strongly associated with guilt for participants high rather than low in moral conviction. Specifically, we conducted a moderated regression analysis to predict guilt, including the same control variables listed in the aforementioned moderated regression analyses. As in previous analyses, the strength by ideology interaction was dropped from the analysis because it was non-significant.<sup>5</sup>

Analyses are presented in Table 3. As one can see, stronger attitudes and greater identification with the political right each predicted decreased guilt, whereas greater moral conviction predicted increased guilt. Consistent with expectations, these effects were qualified by an interaction of ideology and moral conviction. Specifically, participants on the right expressed weaker guilt than those on the left, an effect that was much stronger when more conviction was high,  $B = -0.90, SE = 0.13, t(106) = -6.81, p = .00$ , than when moral conviction was low,  $B = -0.34, SE = 0.17, t(106) = -2.04, p = .044$ .

We then used three regression analyses to investigate whether guilt predicted tolerance for collateral damage, desires for retribution, and support for compromise. We entered gender, personal involvement, attitude strength, moral conviction, ideology, the moral conviction by ideology interaction, and guilt to predict each of the policy preferences (for retribution

Table 3. Unstandardized betas for predictors of anger and guilt

		Anger	Guilt
Step 1	Gender	.13	.42
	Personal involvement	.21	-.01
	Attitude strength (Str)	.10	-.16 <sup>†</sup>
	Ideology (Id)	<b>.30**</b>	<b>-.68***</b>
	Moral conviction	.03	.19
Step 2	Gender	.12	.44
	Personal involvement	.22	-.04
	Attitude strength (Str)	.11	-.20*
	Ideology (Id)	<b>.28**</b>	<b>-.62*</b>
	Moral conviction (Mc)	.01	<b>.25*</b>
	Id x Mc	.09	<b>-.25*</b>
$\Delta R^2$		.01	<b>.04*</b>

<sup>†</sup> $p < .08$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; and \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Significant effects are noted in bold.

we also included the interaction between ideology and attitude strength). Results suggested that guilt significantly predicted decreased tolerance for collateral damage,  $B = -0.33, SE = 0.11, t(104) = -3.10, p = .00$ ; marginally predicted desires for retribution,  $B = -0.16, SE = 0.09, t(104) = -1.79, p = .076$ ; and significantly predicted support for compromise,  $B = 0.19, SE = 0.08, t(101) = 2.43, p = .02$ .

Taken together, analyses indicated that Israelis on the left and right differed in their levels of guilt substantially more when moral conviction was high than when it was low. Furthermore, ideological differences in the experience of guilt predicted Israelis' policy preferences, results that suggest that guilt might mediate the conditional effects of ideology on policy preferences.

To test the mediating role of guilt in predicting policy preferences, we used a series of moderated mediation analyses with 3000 bootstrap samples (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007; Model 2). In each analysis, we entered the same control variables included in the aforementioned moderated regression analyses.<sup>6</sup> We entered ideology as the focal independent variable, moral conviction as a moderator, and ingroup guilt as the mediator. As predicted, guilt played a mediating role in the conditional relation between ideology and policy preferences. Specifically, when moral conviction was low, guilt did not significantly mediate the relationship between ideology and tolerance for collateral damage, support for retribution, or support for compromise (Table 4 for detailed results). However, when moral conviction was high, guilt mediated the relationship between ideology and tolerance for collateral damage and support for compromise, but not retribution.

**Summary**

Differences in policy preferences for Israelis on the left and right were more pronounced when moral conviction was high than when moral conviction was low. Furthermore, guilt but not anger mediated the interactive effects of ideology and moral conviction on two of the three policy preferences, with Israelis on the right expressing substantially less guilt than those on the left when moral conviction was high. Furthermore, ideological differences in the experience of guilt shaped

<sup>4</sup>When guilt is included in the analysis as an additional control, the pattern of results remains the same. Furthermore, when guilt is included as a control, it does not significantly predict anger.

<sup>5</sup>The pattern of results remained the same when anger was included in the analysis as an additional control. Anger did not significantly predict guilt.

<sup>6</sup>The pattern of results remained the same when anger was also included as a control in the moderated mediation analyses.

Table 4. Bootstrap coefficients and confidence intervals for the indirect effect of ideology on policy preferences through guilt at low and high moral conviction

	Guilt			
	Low moral conviction		High moral conviction	
	Boot coefficient	CI (lower, upper)	Boot coefficient	CI (lower, upper)
Collateral damage	.088	-.023, .276	<b>.301</b>	<b>.060, .517</b>
Retribution	.039	-.011, .166	.145	-.028, .322
Compromise	-.058	-.198, .002	<b>-.176</b>	<b>-.340, -.010</b>

Note: The indirect effect of ideology on policy preferences through guilt is significant when the confidence interval does not include 0. Significant effects are noted in bold.

Israelis' tolerance for collateral damage and support for compromise. In short, moral conviction amplifies ideological differences in policy preferences and, in this context, did so through the mediating role of group-based guilt.

## DISCUSSION

The current study tested the hypothesis that moral conviction moderates the relation between political ideology and policy preferences in the context of intractable conflict. Findings support this hypothesis: the relation between ideology and policy preferences—across three different dependent variables—was significantly stronger for Jewish-Israelis who were high in moral conviction about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict than for those low in moral conviction. Most notably, we found no difference in policy preferences among the political left and right for those whose position on the conflict was low in moral conviction. The ideological divide in policy preferences occurred only among those whose position on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict was higher in moral conviction. The findings of this study expand our understanding of the impact of “moral mandates”: stronger moral investment in a political topic not only increases political engagement among the political right and left (Skitka & Bauman, 2008), but it also increases polarization among them. Correspondingly, this finding sheds light on the resistance to resolution so characteristic of intractable conflicts. Evidence from earlier work on moral conviction demonstrates that the degree to which people see controversial issues in a moral light predicts their unwillingness to work with those who disagree with them to resolve conflict, to agree on conflict resolution mechanisms, and to respect existing resolution mechanisms (e.g., Skitka et al., 2005). Our results shed some light on why and extend these results to help understand people's positions about issues as important as war and peace.

Perhaps the most dramatic finding of our study is that the political left and right do not differ on conflict-related policies in the absence of moral conviction about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The finding that ideology only matters in this context (i.e., that ideology only differentially predicts policy preferences) when people are morally motivated raises many follow-up questions: What is the function of ideology for those low in moral conviction? If they hold similar positions, why do they choose to self-identify as “right” or “left”? Are these labels interchangeable? Does ideological

identification have different origins among those with high versus low moral conviction? Will distinct political persuasion efforts be more effective for those low versus high in moral conviction?

In addition, for two of the three dependent measures (i.e., tolerance for collateral damage and support for compromise), the effect of moral conviction on the relationship between ideology and policy preferences was mediated through ingroup guilt and not through outgroup anger. Among those high in moral conviction about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Israelis on the left versus the right reported significantly higher levels of ingroup guilt, whereas this difference was much weaker among those low in moral conviction. Level of guilt, in turn, shaped policy preferences for those high in moral conviction: for those on the left, greater guilt predicted lower tolerance of collateral damage and higher support for compromise; for those on the right, we observed exactly the reverse. This last finding is especially interesting because it demonstrates not only the mediating role of guilt as a moral emotion but also the mediating role of the *absence* of guilt among those on the right.

Given the action tendencies associated with guilt, these results suggest that those on the political left who are high in moral conviction feel both responsible for the harm suffered by Palestinians during Operation Cast Lead and a concern for their well-being. Simultaneously, the results suggest that the absence of guilt among the political right who are high in moral conviction results either from appraisals of lack of responsibility for harm endured by the Palestinians during Operation Cast Lead (e.g., through attributions such as “they brought it on themselves”), emotional disengagement from the suffering of Palestinians, or possibly both (e.g., Bandura, 1999; Branscombe & Miron, 2004; Roccas, Klar, & Liviatan, 2006). These differences, in turn, could be associated with the differential tolerance for war, as well as preference for solutions that include or ignore the interests of the outgroup.

Notably, however, the moderated effects were not mediated through outgroup anger. We expected otherwise based on earlier work on the role of anger in shaping policy preferences (e.g., Cheung-Blunden & Blunden, 2008; Huddy et al., 2007; Skitka et al., 2006), including those of Israelis regarding the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (e.g., Reifen Tagar et al., 2011). In retrospect, we suggest interpreting this null finding in light of the research on the distinct psychological needs—and corresponding emotions—experienced by the more and less powerful sides in a protracted conflict (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). This work suggests that intergroup conflict challenges the

aggressors' moral image, whereas it challenges the victims' sense of status and power. The former likely makes feelings of guilt more prominent, leading either to stronger feelings of guilt or rejection (or suppression) of guilt for their group's actions (see also Roccas et al., 2006), the latter more likely to arouse feelings of anger against the aggressing outgroup (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). At the time we collected our data—that is, immediately following Operation Cast Lead in which Palestinians incurred dramatically greater harm than Israelis did—Israelis were indeed concerned with the moral image of their group (Čehajić et al., 2011). As such, guilt, but not anger, would be more likely to inform their policy preferences, which is indeed what we find. This interpretation, then, points to a potential moderator variable that should be explored in future research, specifically the aggressor versus victim roles of the sides to the conflict.

Finally, although our *a priori* hypothesized model places moral conviction as the moderator in the relation between ideology and the policy preferences of interest, because of the correlational nature of our data, we tested the alternative model—that is, positioning ideology as the moderator in the relation between moral conviction and ideology. We found that there is a distinct pattern of moderated effects for left and right leaning participants. Specifically, for those on the left, the gap in the dependent measure between low and high moral conviction was evident for tolerance of “collateral damage” and support for compromise, but not for retribution, whereas for those on the right, the gap in scores on the dependent measure between those low and high in moral conviction was evident for retribution, marginally for collateral damage, and not for compromise. One way to understand the different patterns among those with high and low moral conviction on the left and on the right across dependent measures is through the lens of Moral Foundation Theory (Haidt, 2007). Liberals' moral concerns, on the one hand, are primarily centered around questions of harm and fairness, often referred to as individualizing concerns because they both focus on the well-being of the individual (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). Correspondingly, left leaning Israelis whose views on the conflict are held with strong moral conviction are more likely to be sensitive to issues affecting individuals or rights, such as the case with tolerance for “collateral damage” and support for compromise, respectively (recall support for compromise included recognition of Palestinian rights to self-determination and Palestinian refugee rights). Conservatives' moral concerns, on the other hand, while also including individualizing considerations, are also, and even more likely, to revolve around binding moral considerations—that is values that uphold the group (Graham et al., 2009). Through this frame, then, it might not be surprising that right leaning Israelis differ on policy preferences that are arguably more group based, such as retribution toward Palestinians in general (otherwise considered collective punishment). Of course, this interpretation is speculative, and further research would be needed to examine its validity. Either way, the results of this alternative model are consistent with the notion that moral conviction amplifies ideological differences in policy preferences.

Overall, we now know more than we did before about the psychological factors that lead to left–right ideological divides and that fuel intractable conflict—and the central role that

moral conviction plays in this context. The proposed directionality of our model was based on a rich body of literature establishing the role of emotions in forming behavioral tendencies in general (e.g., Frijda, 1986, 2006; Frijda, Kuipers, & Ter Schure, 1989; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Roseman et al., 1994) and policy preferences in particular, including in the Israeli–Palestinian context (e.g., Halperin, 2011; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Reifen Tagar et al., 2011; Skitka et al., 2006); however, the correlational nature of our design leaves a need for future experimental corroboration of our model. Most importantly, perhaps, future research should study whether it is possible to demoralize political attitudes in an effort to facilitate conflict resolution or to otherwise bridge the ideological divide on policy preferences toward outgroups in the context of intractable conflict.

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