Sacred Bounds on Rational Conflict Resolution: The Middle East and Beyond

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Abstract

Increasingly across the world, political conflict is as a moral clash between different sets of sacred values, which a moral community treats as possessing transcendental significance that precludes comparisons or tradeoffs with instrumental values of realpolitik or the marketplace. In experiments with Israeli settlers, Palestinian refugees and Hamas students we found that violent opposition to compromise over issues considered sacred is (a) increased by offering material incentives to compromise but (b) is decreased when the adversary makes materially irrelevant compromises over their own sacred values. This suggests that peace between clashing moral communities cannot be achieved by instrumental calculations alone.
Current approaches to resolving resource conflicts (1) or countering political violence (2) tend to assume adversaries make instrumentally rational choices. When antagonists treat the issues under dispute as fungible resources this assumption is likely to hold. In such a situation we could reasonably expect that violent opposition to political compromise over important issues would decrease as the cost of the compromise is defrayed by instrumental benefits. However, adversaries can transform the issues under dispute into sacred values as is the case when land ceases to be a mere resource and becomes “holy” or when structures of brick and mortar become “sacred sites.” We argue that when resources are transformed into sacred values, standard political and economic proposals for resolving longstanding conflicts such as material compensation for suffering may be less than optimal. Nowhere is this issue more pressing than in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, which people across the world consistently view as the greatest danger to world peace (3).

Instrumental decision-making involves strict cost-benefit calculations regarding goals, and entails abandoning or adjusting goals if costs for realizing them are too high. Although the field of judgment and decision-making has made enormous progress (4), much more is known about economic decision making than about morally motivated behavior. There is relatively little knowledge, study or theoretical discussion of sacred values, which differ from instrumental values by incorporating moral (including religious) beliefs (5, 6) that may drive action (7)“independently of its prospect of success” (8). In laboratory experiments, people asked to trade-off sacred values for instrumental rewards tend to react with outrage and anger, although they are able to accept trading off one sacred value for another (9, 10). We believe that these findings imply that reasoning about sacred values involves
deontological rather than consequentialist rules. Moreover, one such deontological imperative appears to treat as morally unacceptable or taboo any attempt to measure sacred values along an instrumental metric, just as religion forbids any mingling of the sacred with the profane (11). This reasoning led us to predict that adding instrumental benefits to compromise over important issues in a violent political conflict would increase outrage of those antagonists who have transformed these issues into sacred values.

While people may violently resist any attempt to buy off their moral commitments to sacred values, this should not be taken to mean that sacred values are closed to compromise. Clearly, people are able to measure the relative worth of sacred values they hold and trade-off these values when they come into conflict (9-11). We investigated the possibility that antagonism to compromise over sacred values might be mitigated by equitable losses over sacred values by both sides in a dispute. People appear to have a desire for equitable outcomes that is pursued with a disregard to instrumental consequences (12) and will often be willing to incur a loss due to the pleasure gained from punishing another party (13). Thus, we predicted that those who hold sacred values would be less antagonistic to compromise over those values if the adversary suffers a similar loss over their own sacred values, even if the adversaries’ loss does not instrumentally alter the compromise deal at hand.

We tested these hypotheses in field experiments integrated within surveys of three populations living in the West Bank and Gaza: 601 Jewish Israeli “settlers”, 535 Palestinian refugees, and 719 Palestinian students (half of whom identified themselves with Hamas or its smaller Islamist ally, Palestinian Islamic Jihad). We measured emotional outrage and propensity for violence in response to hypothetical peace deals involving compromises over issues integral to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (14, 15): exchanging land for peace (in experiments with
settlers); Jerusalem (in experiments with Palestinian students); the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their former lands and homes inside Israel (in experiments with Palestinian refugees); and recognition of the validity of the adversary’s own sacred values (in each sample). In our experiments all participants were opposed to compromises over these issues. In addition, a subset of participants had transformed this preference into a sacred value, opposing any trade-off over the relevant issue in exchange for peace no matter how great the benefit to their people.

Our aim was to compare reactions to different types of deals amongst these two subsets of participants: (1) moral absolutists who had transformed a significant issue in dispute into a sacred value; and (2) non-absolutists who had strong preferences with respect to the issue, but did not regard it as a sacred value. Amongst settlers, 46% of the sample believed that it was never permissible for the Jewish people to “give up” part of the “Land of Israel” no matter how great the benefit. This group contained moral absolutists with respect to the “Land of Israel” and may be distinguished from the remainder of settlers who, while opposing ceding land, did not rule out treating land as a fungible resource under extreme circumstances. Amongst Palestinian students 53.5% treated both the right of return and Jerusalem as sacred values. In the refugee survey, 80% of participants were moral absolutists with respect to the “right of return” for Palestinian refugees (16).

In each experiment one third of our participants were randomly selected to respond to a peace deal (see supporting online material) that involved a significant compromise over an important issue in exchange for peace. For example, Israeli settlers responded to deals that entailed Israeli withdrawal from 99% of the West Bank and Gaza in exchange for peace, Palestinian refugees responded to deals that violated the Palestinian “right of return” and Palestinian students responded to a deal that called for the recognition of the legitimacy of the
State of Israel. For the moral absolutists, these deals then involved a taboo trade-off (17) over sacred values. While for the non-absolutists, deals involved compromise over strong preferences. Another third of our participants were randomly selected to respond to the same taboo deal with an added instrumental incentive, such as money (“taboo+”). The remainder of our participants responded to the “taboo” deal without an added instrumental incentive but where the adversary also made a “taboo” trade-off over one of their own sacred values in a manner that was designed to not add instrumental value to the deal (18) nor detract from the taboo nature of the deal (“tragic”).

From a rational perspective, the added instrumental incentive in the taboo+ deal means that those responding to the taboo+ deal should show less outrage and lower preferences for violent opposition compared to those responding to the taboo deal. In fact, Israeli settlers, Palestinian students and refugees who had transformed the issue under dispute into a sacred value showed the opposite response (see Fig 1). For these participants, enhancing the instrumental value of the trade-off increased rather than decreased their emotional outrage and their support for violent opposition to the deal (18). In contrast, non-absolutists for whom deals violated a preference reacted rationally to the instrumental enhancement of Taboo+ deals by showing less support for violence and less emotional outrage (19).

Although added instrumental benefits increased opposition to compromises over sacred values, we generally (20) found that opposition to the same compromise decreased when the deal involved the adversary making a similar compromise over one of their own sacred values (see Fig 2). This was the case even though the tragic clauses added no instrumental value. For example, in one experiment Palestinian students were told in a taboo peace deal that if they compromised on Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem, a Palestinian state would be
created in the West Bank and Gaza. In the tragic version, Israel in turn agreed to “formally declare that it gives up what it believes is its sacred right to the West Bank” (21).

Israeli settlers, Palestinian refugees and students (mainly Hamas) who had transformed issues in the dispute into sacred values reacted non-instrumentally to compromise over those values. Although the statistical effect sizes between experimental conditions are moderate, the practical consequences of small changes in the popularity of peace deals and the leaders who promote them are significant. For example, a shift in popularity by a few percentage points of a political leader who advocates political compromise over violence can determine the results of an election. This has persistently been the case in the recent history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (22). These results reveal that in political disputes where sources of conflict are cultural, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or emerging clashes between the Muslim and Judeo-Christian world, violent opposition to compromise solutions may be exacerbated rather than decreased by insisting on instrumentally-driven tradeoffs, while non-instrumental symbolic compromises may reduce support for violence (23).
References


16. We were unable to compare moral absolutists with non-absolutists in the refugee study. Unlike the other two studies, random assignment to experimental conditions in
the refugee study was made in clusters rather than individually. The small numbers of non-absolutist refugees meant that we were unable to distinguish between the effects of our experimental manipulations and neighbourhood differences for non-absolutists. Nevertheless we report this study because of its important implications for policy and because the statistically reliable pattern found amongst moral absolutist refugees replicated the pattern found for moral absolutists in the other two studies.


18. Others may argue that the tragic deal offered indirect benefits by signalling the adversary’s willingness to make significant compromises. As we argue in the text, this would imply a greater confidence in the peaceful implementation of the deal being considered. However, people evaluating the tragic deal did not demonstrate a greater belief that it would be peacefully implemented than people evaluating the other deals. In addition, one of the tragic trade-offs (Scenario B for refugees) explicitly stated that the Israeli concession was purely symbolic. The results here were the same as for the other scenarios: compared to those evaluating the taboo deal, those evaluating the tragic deal predicted less violence in response \( t \{272\} = 2.046, P = .042 \), were less likely to respond with joy at the thought of suicide attacks \( t \{298\} = 2.812, P = .005 \) and were less likely to believe that Islam condoned such attacks \( t \{279\} = 2.094, P = .037 \).

19. An alternative interpretation of increased outrage in response to the taboo+ deals by moral absolutists it that the added instrumental benefit in the taboo+ deals may have led to a reactive devaluation of other components of the deal. However if this were the case, outrage to the peace deals should have increased in the taboo+ deals for both moral absolutists and non-absolutists. Instead only moral absolutists showed. See Ross, L. (1995). Reactive Devaluation in Negotiation and Conflict Resolution. In
This pattern was reliable for measures of support for violence and emotional outrage of Israeli settlers and Palestinian refugees. Amongst Palestinian students the same result was found for emotional outrage while no reliable effects were found for support for suicide attacks.

Although this clause added nothing instrumental to the deal, we investigated the possibility that moral absolutists may have interpreted the “tragic” deal instrumentally, as a display of Israeli commitment to peace. One would then expect participants in the “tragic” condition more likely to believe that the peace deal could be “peacefully and successfully implemented leading to an independent Palestinians state in the West Bank and Gaza.” However, this was not the case (all $P_s > .1$). The same result was found in all experiments in each population where participants evaluating the tragic deal were no more likely than other participants to believe that the deal could be peacefully and successfully implemented (all $P_s > .1$).


Preliminary results on the settler and refugee studies were presented to members of the National Security Council at the White House on April 28, 2006, and to the Permanent Monitoring Panel on Terrorism of the World Federation of Scientists in Erice, Italy on May 19, 2006. In the discussions that followed, there was general agreement that conflicts over matters of essential principle were both more difficult to resolve but also key to reversing the widening gap in understanding between Western and Muslim societies. As a follow up to the Erice meeting, scientists close to their respective governments discussed with the second author discuss possible ways of implementing the study's insights, in particular to the suggestion that violence and
opposition to a peace deal can significantly decrease when the adversary makes materially irrelevant compromises over their own sacred values: for example, simply by recognizing that the other side was wronged. For example, Dr. Isaac Ben Israel, a former Israeli Air Force Major General who currently heads his country’s space agency stated in an interview with the second author in Tel Aviv on June 4, 2006: “Israel recognizes that the [Hamas-led] Palestinian government is still completely focused on what it considers to be its essential principles, which includes the right of return of Palestinian refugees to all of historical Palestine, and as long as they focus on that it will undermine the significance of any pragmatic steps we undertake with them.” Pakistani Senator Dr. Khurshid Ahmad, Vice President of Jama’at-e-Islami, one of the oldest and most important Islamist movements in the world, surmised in an interview with the second author in Islamabad on June 12, 2006 that only a mutual recognition of each side’s moral legitimacy in the Palestine-Israel conflict would lead to “the Hamas government accepting a two-state solution, with both Palestine and Israel having full economic, political and military sovereignty over their pre-1967 territories, and with any Palestinian being allowed into Palestine and any Jew into Israel; [and if this happens] then I would recommend this solution to the entire Muslim ummah [world community].” Dr. Ghazi Hamad, a Hamas leader and spokesman for the Palestinian government stated in an interview with the second author in Gaza City on June 20, 2006: “In principle we have no problem with a Palestinian state encompassing all off our lands within the 1967 borders, with perhaps minor modifications on a dunam for dunam basis [10 dunams = 1 hectare]. But let Israel recognize their responsibility for our tragedy in 1948, and then we can talk about negotiating over our right of return to historic Palestine.”

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Figure 1
Figure 1. Responses of Palestinian students, Israeli settlers and Palestinian refugees to either “taboo” peace deals (grey bars) involving a compromise over a significant issue in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, or “taboo+” peace deals (black bars) which are taboo deals with an added instrumental incentive such as money. Two types of responses were measured: divergence from overall mean support for violence to oppose peace deals (Panels A and B for Palestinian students, Panel C for Israeli settlers, Panel G for refugees), disgust and anger at proposed deals (Panels D and E for Palestinian students, Panel F for Israeli settlers) and Palestinian reports of feeling joy when hearing of suicide attacks against Israeli targets (Panel H). In experiments with Palestinian students and Israeli settlers the same pattern emerged (.001 > Ps < .05). First, respondents who perceived the issue being compromised as a sacred value responded with more support for violence and emotional outrage than those who perceived the issue to be a preference. Second, the influence of the added instrumental incentive in the Taboo+ deal differed depending on whether respondents perceived the issue under dispute to be a sacred value or a preference. Those who perceived a compromise over sacred values reacted non-instrumentally with greater support for violence and emotional outrage in response to the added instrumental incentive in the taboo+ deal compared to the taboo deal. In contrast, those who perceived the deals as involving compromise over a preference reacted instrumentally with less support for violence in response to the added instrumental incentive in the taboo+ deal. Responses of Palestinian refugees who held the right of return to be a sacred value followed the same pattern as participants with sacred values in other studies in that support for violence (Panel G) and emotional outrage (Panel H) increased in response to added instrumental incentives.
Figure 2 Participants who perceived peace deals to involve a compromise over their sacred values responded with less anger and disgust (Panels A and B for Palestinian students, Panel C for Israeli settlers), less joy when hearing about suicide attacks against Israeli targets (Palestinian refugees, Panel D) and less support for violence (Panel E for Israeli settlers, Panel F for Palestinian refugees) to “Tragic” peace deals involving the adversary’s non-instrumental concession of one of their own sacred values (grey bars) compared to Taboo and Taboo+ deals (black bars) ($0.001 > P_s < 0.06$ one-tailed).
Methods and Data Analysis

Israeli Settlers

Participants and Procedures A sample of 601 Jewish adults residing in the West Bank and Gaza (settlers) was selected via random digit dialing procedures in which all telephone numbers had an equal probability of selection. This population consists primarily of people who moved to the West Bank and Gaza after the 1967 war for economic benefits or religious/ideological beliefs and who occupy significant tracts of land that would make up a Palestinian State and generally refuse to leave. The sample was 50.7% female; the median age was 34 (range: 18-61); the median education level was 13-14 years of formal higher education (some college education); 20.8% described themselves as non-religious, 20.3% as traditional, 33.1% as “Religious Leumi” (National-Religious), and 20.1% as Religious-Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox); 27.6% described themselves as having an average income, 31.6% as below average and 30.4% as above average. The survey was carried out in August 2005, a few days before the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

The experiment was embedded within a larger survey and its order within the survey was assigned randomly to each participant using computer-assisted telephone-interviewing so that there were no “order effects” in responses. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two scenario types (“A” or “B”) and then to one of three different types of deals within each scenario (“taboo”, “taboo+” or “tragic”). All deals (and all measures in the experiment) were subjected to rigorous pre-testing to ensure transparency of meaning and comprehension. See Appendix for a full description of each
type of scenario and deal. Note that the tragic deal is instrumentally equivalent to the taboo deal. Palestinians “giving up” the right of return (in the “tragic” deal, Scenario A) is purely symbolic as in all types of deals presented, no Palestinians are allowed to return. Palestinians recognizing the legitimacy of the State of Israel (in the “tragic” deal, Scenario B) is again purely symbolic as each deal explicitly includes a Jewish State of Israel alongside the Palestinian state. In contrast, the “taboo+” deal is instrumentally superior to the “taboo” and “tragic” deals. In Scenario A the taboo+ deal involves a monetary incentive, and in Scenario B the taboo+ deal promises freedom from violence and a life of peace. For all measures, there was no interaction between scenario type and type of deal (all Fs < .5, all Ps > .6) thus the results presented here are pooled for Scenario Type A and Scenario Type B.

**Measures. Sacred values:** To determine which participants believed that the “Land of Israel” was a essential value we asked participants: “Do you agree that there are some extreme circumstances where it would be permissible for the Jewish people to give away part of the Land of Israel?” (Possible responses: Yes, No, Don’t know). Those who answered “No” (46%) expressed the belief that the integrity of the Land of Israel was an essential value that was closed to instrumental evaluation. Religious settlers were more likely than secular settlers to believe that the “Land of Israel” was an essential value (Wald = 23.457, OR = 3.54, P < .001) while settlers with more education were less likely to believe the land of Israel was an essential value (Wald = 4.481, OR = 0.84, P = .034).

**Criterion Variables:** After hearing about a hypothetical peace deal we asked participants to describe their affective response, about their support for violent opposition to the deal and how implementable they believed the deal was. To measure emotional responses, participants were asked “which of the following words best describes how you would feel about an Israeli leader who would sign such a deal: pity, disgust, approval,
anger or neutral?” Because pre-testing suggested that direct measures were unlikely to be answered by participants due to political and legal sensitivities, we used an indirect measure by asking participants to estimate the percentage of “typical settlers who would use violence to oppose this agreement”. This measure took advantage of the highly robust finding of a positive correlation between people’s own opinions and preferences with their estimates of the relative frequency of these opinions and preferences in the population (1, 2). Thus, an expectation of levels of violence was used as an indirect measure of each participant’s own preferences for violent responses.

**Analysis** We first tested the expectation that: a) across conditions, moral absolutists would display more emotional outrage and support for violence than non-absolutists; b) moral absolutists, for whom deals involved compromises over sacred values, would irrationally report more emotional outrage and greater support for violence when responding to Taboo+ deals compared to Taboo deals; c) non-absolutists for whom peace deals involved compromises over strong preferences, would rationally report less emotional outrage and support for violence in response to Taboo+ deals compared Taboo deals as the former deals included added instrumental incentives. To test these hypotheses we used the following focussed contrasts (weights in parentheses) to test the expectation of the following order between conditions: Sacred Value/Taboo+ (+3) > Sacred Value/Taboo (+1) > Preference/Taboo (-1) > Preference/Taboo+ (-3). This linear contrast proved statistically significant for measures of support for violence (t[438] = 4.965, \(P < 0.001\), one-tailed) and emotional outrage (t[438] = 2.985, \(P = 0.0015\), one-tailed). We second tested the expectation that moral absolutists responding to the Tragic deals would, compared to those responding to Taboo and Taboo+ deals, show less emotional outrage (t[438] = 2.798, \(P = 0.0025\), one-tailed) and support for violence (t[595] = 1.593, \(P = 0.06\), one-tailed).
Palestinian Students

Participants and Procedures  A sample of 719 Palestinian students were surveyed individually in 14 Palestinian university campuses throughout the West Bank and Gaza in May-June 2006, a month before the Israeli re-entry into Gaza. The sample consisted of approximately equal numbers of students who self-identified as Islamists (50.1%) and Nationalists (49.9%), of males (49.9%) and females (50.1%). The median age of respondents was 20 (range: 18-38). Thirty-six percent said their family lived below the official poverty line (1700 NIS monthly), 23% said their family was on the poverty line while about 30% were above the poverty line.

The experiments were embedded within a larger survey by the Palestinain Center for Policy and Survey Research. All respondents participated in two surveys one of which occurred at the start of the survey and the second at the end. Participants were randomly allocated into the Taboo+, Taboo or Tragic conditions and were in the same condition for both experiments. Both experiments measured reactions to a peace deal. All deals (and all measures in each experiment) were subjected to rigorous pre-testing to ensure transparency of meaning and comprehension. See Appendix for a full description of each type of experiment and deal. Again note that the tragic deal is instrumentally equivalent to the taboo deal. Israel “giving up” their rights to the West Bank (in the “tragic” deal, Experiment 2) or recognizing the Palestinian state (in the “tragic” deal, Experiment 1) are purely symbolic gestures as in all types of deals presented, a Palestinian State would be created on the West Bank. In contrast, the “taboo+” deal is instrumentally superior to the “taboo” and “tragic” deals, involving different types of monetary incentives.

Measures. Sacred values: 57.9% of the sample were moral-absolutists who rejected any compromise over either the Palestinian right of return and Palestinian
sovereignty over Jerusalem no matter how great the benefit to the Palestinian people. Self-identifying Islamists were more likely to moral absolutists than Nationalists (Wald = 8.941, OR = 1.643, P = .003) and frequency of Mosque attendance (but not prayer) positively predicted the likelihood of being a moral absolutist (Wald = 7.141, OR = 1.153, P = .008).

**Criterion Variables:** After hearing about a hypothetical peace deal we asked participants to describe their affective response, about their support for violent opposition to the deal and how implementable they believed the deal was. To measure emotional responses, participants were asked “which of the following words best describes how you best describes how you feel about this deal: pity, disgust, approval, anger or neutral?” We then asked them to indicate which of these emotions also described their emotional responses. We created an index of emotional outrage by giving participants a score of “4” if they used anger or disgust to describe both their first and second emotional response, a score of “3” if they only used anger or disgust to describe their first emotional response, a score of “2” if they only used anger or disgust to describe their second emotional response, and a score of “1” if participants never nominated anger or disgust as an accurate description of their emotional reactions.

We again used an indirect measure of support for violence by asking participants to estimate the percentage of typical Palestinians who would “support a campaign of suicide attacks to oppose this agreement” (in Experiment 1) and “would martyr themselves in a suicide attack to oppose this agreement” (in Experiment 2).

**Analysis** We first tested the expectation that: a) across conditions, moral absolutists would display more emotional outrage and support for violence than non-absolutists; b) moral absolutists, for whom deals involved compromises over sacred values, would
irrationally report more emotional outrage and greater support for violence when responding to Taboo+ deals compared to Taboo deals; c) non-absolutists for whom peace deals involved compromises over strong preferences, would rationally report less emotional outrage and support for violence in response to Taboo+ deals compared Taboo deals as the former deals included added instrumental incentives. To test these hypotheses we used the following focussed contrasts (weights in parentheses) to test the expectation of the following order between conditions: Sacred Value/Taboo+ (+3) > Sacred Value/Taboo (+1) > Preference/Taboo (-1) > Preference/Taboo+ (-3). This linear contrast proved statistically significant for measures of support for violence in Experiment 1 (t[691] = .479, P = 0.0065, one-tailed) and Experiment 2 (t[688] = 3.025, P = 0.0015, one-tailed) and emotional outrage in Experiment 1 (t[713] = 2.79, P = 0.0025, one-tailed) and Experiment 2 (t[713] = 2.159, P = 0.015, one-tailed). We then tested the expectation that moral absolutists responding to the Tragic deals would, compared to those responding to Taboo and Taboo+ deals, show less emotional outrage in Experiment 1 (t[713] = 3.506, P < 0.001) and Experiment 2 (t[713] = 2.435, P = 0.0075, one-tailed). In neither experiment was this hypothesis supported for measures of support for violence (n.s.).

**Palestinian Refugees**

**Participants and Procedures.** A sample of 535 Palestinian refugees residing in the West Bank and Gaza was interviewed in person by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in late December 2005, one month before Hamas’s election to power. The sampling process went through three stages (1) randomly selecting population locations (clusters or counting areas) using probability proportionate to size; (2) randomly selecting households from the population locations using updated maps; (3) selecting a person who is 18 years or older from among persons in the house using Kiesh
tables’ method. The sample was self-weighting, but there was also checking that the age
groups obtained were similar to those in the society using data from official Palestinian
and Israeli government statistics. To maximize the chances to enter all homes in the
sample, two fieldworkers, a male and a female, conducted every interview to overcome
social difficulties that might prevent a male/female from entering a home that would not
have males/females at the time of interview. Respondents were assured anonymity.

Profile of respondents: All were Muslim; 52.4% were female; the median age was
34 (range: 18-81); 25.3% had at least some college education, 31.8% were high school
graduates, 25% had some high school education, 4.1% were illiterate; 90.1% prayed five
times a day; 50.4% said that their family’s monthly income was below the poverty line
(NIS 1,800), 16.5% said that their family’s income was “the same” as the poverty line,
and 28.7% as over the poverty line.

In the Palestine survey, the experiment occurred at the beginning of the survey.
Participants were randomly assigned to one of two scenario types (“A” or “B”) and then
to one of three different types of deals within each scenario (“taboo”, “taboo+” or
“tragic”). See supporting materials for a full description of each type of scenario and deal.
Again, note that the tragic deal is instrumentally equivalent to the taboo deal while the
“taboo+” deal is instrumentally superior to the “taboo” and “tragic” deals. For all
measures, there was no interaction between scenario type and type of deal (all $F$s < 1.8,
all $P$s > .1) thus the results presented here are pooled for Scenario Type A and Scenario
Type B. The two different scenario types and each type of deal associated with each
scenario are re-produced in supporting materials.

Materials. Sacred values: To determine which participants believed that the “right
of return” for Palestinian refuge was a sacred value we asked participants: “Do you agree
that there are some extreme circumstances where it would be permissible for the Palestinian people to give up the right of return?” (Possible responses: Yes, No, Don’t know). Those who answered “No” (80%) expressed the belief that the right of return was a moral value that was closed to instrumental evaluation.

Criterion Variables: After hearing about a hypothetical peace deal we asked participants about their support for violent opposition to the deal and how implementable they believed the deal was. We then asked three ostensibly unrelated questions measuring support for suicide attacks.

Support for violence: We again used an indirect measure by asking participants to estimate the percentage of “typical Palestinians who would use violence to oppose this agreement”.

Implementability: Participants were asked “Do you think this deal could be peacefully and successfully implemented?” (Possible responses: Yes, No, Don’t know). As noted in the paper, perceived implementability did not differ between experimental conditions (all Walds < 1, all Ps > .6).

Support for suicide attacks: Two questions dealing with whether Islam supported suicide bombing were asked immediately after the “implementability” question. First, participants were asked: “In your opinion, what is the position of Islam regarding bombing attacks (which some call martyrdom attacks and others call suicide attacks) that target civilians such as the bombing of a bus in an Israeli city?” (Possible responses: certainly supports, supports, opposes, certainly opposes/ Don’t know). Second, participants were asked: “In your opinion, what is the position of Islam regarding the bomber who carried out the bombing attack (which some call martyrdom attacks and others call suicide attacks) killing himself with the aim of killing the enemy, as some
Palestinians do? Does Islam allow or not allow such an action”” (Possible responses: certainly allows, allows, does not allow, certainly does not allow/ Don’t know). Responses to these two questions were correlated ($r = .603, P < .001$) and formed a reliable scale (Cronbach’s Alpha = .735).

A third question asked participants to nominate their first emotional reaction “when hearing about bombing attacks (which some call martyrdom attacks and others call suicide attacks)?” Participants were given a choice of fifteen emotions including joy. Overall, joy was the most common response (56.3%), although as the results presented in the paper show, this response was strongly influenced by context: in this case which deal participants responded to in our survey. This question was asked following several other questions dealing with emotional reactions (to Israeli checkpoints, Israeli settlements and the Israeli “security barrier). Participants were unaware of any intended link between the “peace deal” they had been asked about and this item, ruling out posturing. Instead, any impact of experimental condition (deal type) and responses to this question were a result of context effects (3) where emotions and cognitions associated with the type of deal participants had been asked to consider influenced their affective response to hearing about a suicide attack.

**Data Analysis** We used focused linear contrasts (contrast weights in parentheses) to test the hypothesis that for moral absolutist refugees, who held the “right of return” to be a sacred value, opposition to peace deals involving compromising this value would be highest in response to the Taboo+ deal which was the most instrumentally favorable and lowest in response to the Tragic deal: Taboo+ (2) > Taboo (1) > Tragic (-3). This linear contrasts was statistically significant for support for violence ($t [480] = 2.631, P = .0045$ one-tailed), belief that Islam supported suicide attacks ($t [493] = 2.797, P = .0025$ one-
tailed) and reports of “joy” when hearing of a suicide attack against Israelis (t [529] = 2.726, \( P = .002 \) one-tailed). Compared to refuges responding to the other two types of deals, those responding to the tragic deals showed less support for violence (t[384] = 2.467, \( P = .007 \) one-tailed), less belief that Islam supported suicide attacks (t[391] = 2.639, \( P = .0045 \) one-tailed) and were about half as likely to report feeling joy when hearing of a suicide attack (Wald = 6.91, OR = .513, \( P = .0045 \) one-tailed).

References


Appendix

Scenario Type A: Settler Survey

Taboo

1. Israel would give up 99% of Judea & Samaria. Israel would not absorb ANY refugees
2. This treaty would result in two states – a Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state.

Taboo+

3. In return, the United States would give Israel 1 billion dollars a year for 100 years.

Tragic

3. On their part, Palestinians would give up any claims to their “right of return”– which is sacred to them.

Scenario Type B: Settler Survey

Taboo

1. Israel would be required to recognize the historic legitimacy of the right of Palestinian refugees to return. However, Israel would not absorb ANY refugees.
2. This treaty would result in two states: a Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state taking up 99% of the West Bank and Gaza.

Taboo+

3. In return, the people of the Jewish state of Israel would be able to live in peace and prosperity, free of the threat of war or terrorism.

Tragic

3. On their part, Palestinians would be required to recognize the historic and legitimate right of the Jewish people to Eretz Israel
Experiment 1: Palestinian Student Survey

**Taboo**

1. Palestinians would recognize the sacred and historic right of the Jewish people to Israel.

2. There would be two states – a Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state in 99% of the West Bank and Gaza.

**Taboo+**

3. On their part, Israel will pay Palestine one billion US dollars a year for ten years

**Tragic**

3. On their part, Israel will recognize the historic and legitimate right of the Palestinians to their own state and would apologize for all the wrongs done to the Palestinian people.

Experiment 2: Palestinian Student Survey

**Taboo**

1. This would be a two state solution, resulting in a Jewish State of Israel and a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza.

2. Under this deal Palestinians would agree to give up their sovereignty over East Jerusalem.

**Taboo+**

3. On their part, Israel will pay each Palestinian family one thousand US dollars a year for 10 years in economic assistance.

**Tragic**

3. On their part, Israel would formally declare that it gives up what it believes is its sacred right to the West Bank.
Scenario Type A: Refugee Survey

Taboo

1. Palestinians would be required to give up their right to return to their lands and homes in Israel.

2. There would be two states – a Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

Taboo+

3. In return, the United States and the European Union would give Palestine 1 billion dollars a year for 100 years.

Tragic

3. On their part, Israel would give up what they believe is their sacred right to the West Bank.

Scenario Type B: Refugee Survey

Taboo

1. Palestinians would recognize the historic and legitimate right of the Jewish people to Israel.

2. There would be two states – a Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

3. Palestinian refugees would only be allowed to settle in the state of Palestine, not inside Israel.

Taboo+

4. In return, the Palestinian people would be able to live in peace and prosperity, free of the fear of Israeli violence and aggression.

Tragic

On their part, Israel would symbolically recognize the historic legitimacy of the right of