Does war unify a divided country? Evidence from Israel

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Abstract. Can a severe external threat attenuate internal divisions and unify a divided public? This study examines how the October 7, 2023, terror attack and the ensuing Israel–Hamas war shaped social cohesion and affective polarization among Israeli Jews. Using unique pre-post panel design (N = 2,132) collected before (May–July 2023) and after (May–July 2024) the attack, we assess changes in ideology, policy preferences, affect toward social groups and affective polarization. We find a complex pattern of (de)polarization: Israeli Jews converged ideologically, with center-left respondents shifting rightward and consensus forming around opposition to peace negotiations—reflecting unity around the external threat. Yet attitudes toward judicial reform and religion–state relations remained stable. Affective polarization decreased between judicial reform supporters and opponents but increased sharply between secular and ultra-Orthodox Jews, mirroring shifts in issue salience during wartime. Individual exposure to trauma or loss did not moderate these effects. Overall, the findings reveal both integrative and divisive consequences of collective threat, highlighting the limits of depolarization in a highly polarized society.

Keywords: Israel-Hamas War, Affective Polarization, Depolarization, In- and Outgroup attitudes, Social cohesion, Rally-around-the-flag.

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Introduction

At the official ceremony to commemorate the two-year anniversary of the October 7 terror attack, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that once attacked, "Israelis came together as an iron fist,"[5] suggesting that Israeli society came out of these attacks more unified and stronger, while also gesturing at its more aggressive stance towards its enemies. Indeed, theories of mortality salience and mortality threat, as well as the rally-around-the-flag theory, suggest that when a country is faced with an acute threat - be it a terror attack, a war, a pandemic or a large-scale disaster – internal divisions are put aside, in order to cope with the threat. Research seems to have confirmed these insights with findings of decreasing partisan animosity after 9/11 in the United States, spontaneous peace marches after the train bombings in Spain, and "Je suis Charlie" marches after the attacks in Paris and Nice. Indeed, externally inflicted security threats such as terror or armed conflicts, provide conducive conditions for rallying around the flag (more so than internal crises or disasters), since national unity is necessary to address and counter them. However, many of these effects are temporary and much less is known about the dynamics of the Rally-around-the-flag and societal depolarization in highly polarized contexts. In this paper, we are asking specifically whether a severe external threat can attenuate internal ideological and societal divisions as well as unify a divided public several months after the attack.

The October 7 Hamas attack on Israel and the resulting Israel-Hamas war provide exceptional conditions to address these questions. When the externally inflicted attack took Israel by surprise, the country was deeply polarized politically and affectively (Amitay et al., 2023; Gidron et al., 2025), after ten months of mass protests against the government's attempt to overhaul the judiciary. Immediately after the attack, Israel launched a war on Gaza involving thousands of Israelis through reserve duty. This war, which has been ongoing for two years and has led to countless victims particularly in Gaza,[6] eventually involved additional adversaries of Israel, including Hezbollah, Iran, and the Houthis in Yemen, which effectively impacted all Israelis. These multiple fronts also resulted in a prolonged conflict with high stakes for the entire population, intensifying Israelis' sense of threat.

We utilize unique two-wave panel survey data (N = 2,132) collected before (May–July 2023) and after (May–July 2024) the October 7 attack to examine shifts in political ideology, affect toward

[5] Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s01FJm2qpz8

[6] We acknowledge the devastating outcomes of the war for the Gaza population, resulting in over 67,000 individuals dead, and over 167,000 wounded. There was also profound damage to all infrastructure across the Gaza Strip. Source: OCHA. "Humanitarian Situation Update #329 | Gaza Strip." October, 9, 2025. https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-329-gaza-strip

various societal groups, affective polarization, and positions on the most divisive issues on the public agenda before the attack.

In line with theories of mortality threat and the rally-around-the-flag effect, we find that Israeli Jews converged around issues linked to the external threat, becoming more hawkish on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and expressing increasingly negative attitudes toward outgroups such as Arabs and Palestinians. However, on other dimensions—particularly judicial reform and religion–state relations—attitudes remained largely stable, indicating limits to the unifying effect of the crisis in the medium term. Overall, patterns of (de)polarization reveal both convergence and renewed division: while affective polarization decreased between supporters and opponents of the judicial reform, it increased sharply between secular and ultra-Orthodox Jews. Finally, we find that these dynamics were broadly uniform across the population, with no evidence that personal trauma, loss, or military service moderated the effects—suggesting that the October 7 attack and ensuing war reshaped Israeli public opinion in a largely collective, rather than differential, manner.

Our study provides important nuance to existing theories of mortality threat and the rally-around-the-flag effect by identifying the conditions under which these phenomena are attenuated, namely severe affective and political polarization. Moreover, contrary to previous work that finds the effect declining shortly after the threat is removed, we show that even when the threat persists and even intensifies over a long period of time, it cannot really unify a divided country when polarization is already high. Adding to the rich literature on affective polarization, we provide evidence of how such polarization can be deepened by a national crisis.

The impact of terrorist attacks and mortality threats on social cohesion and polarization

Building on terror-management and existential-threat research, a growing body of literature shows that reminders of death and exposure to terrorism profoundly reshape intergroup and political attitudes. When mortality becomes salient, individuals experience heightened vulnerability and seek psychological safety in their cultural and national identities. Classic terror-management theory predicts that this existential anxiety strengthens adherence to shared worldviews and authority figures who offer symbolic protection (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon 1997; Pyszczynski et al. 2003).

Rally-around-the-flag theories have picked up on the tendency of citizens to unite behind political leaders and national symbols in times of existential crisis. The theory encompasses the idea that short-term surges in presidential approval, trust, and national solidarity generally follow external shocks such as wars, terrorist attacks, or natural disasters. These effects have been documented

across contexts and are typically explained by a number of mechanisms: most importantly, that external threat heightens perceptions of national unity and suppresses partisan conflict; second, that elite and media cues promote conformity and deference to leadership; and finally that this rally effect is based on views that criticism of authority is unpatriotic (Hetherington & Suhay 2011; Huddy et al. 2005).

Prominent examples of this phenomenon include the spike in support for President Bush in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attack. Generally, research by Hetherington and Suhay (2011) and Huddy et al. (2005) find a sharp decline in partisan animosity after 9/11, alongside a surge in collective expressions of unity, such as blood donations, volunteering, and ubiquitous American flag displays. Similarly, after the 2004 Madrid train bombings, millions of Spaniards joined cross-partisan peace rallies under the slogan *"Con las víctimas, con la Constitución y contra el terrorismo,"* ("with the victims, with the constitution and against the terror") producing a short-lived wave of national solidarity before elite blame games re-polarized the public ahead of an upcoming elections. In France, the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* and November Paris attacks likewise generated a powerful but temporary sense of unity, with the overarching slogan of *"Je suis Charlie"* ("I am Charlie") and marches, as well as increased trust in government (Brouard et al. 2018). After the Breivik attacks in Norway in 2011, we even saw more lasting cohesion: leaders framed the tragedy as a call for "more democracy and openness," and surveys showed higher trust and civic engagement even months later (Wollebæk et al. 2012). Similar stories can be told about the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings, when New Zealanders of all backgrounds rallied around the Muslim community in a massive display of national solidarity. A rally-around-the flag effect was also observed in the first months of the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020 with publics rallying around their governments (Bol et al. 2021). Some of these examples show that when leaders frame tragedy inclusively—as a shared moral and civic challenge—terror and threat can momentarily overcome differences and unify rather than divide, democratic societies. In other cases, the perpetrators could not be easily linked to outgroups, making it easier to convey a message of unity and solidarity. These cases seem to illustrate that collective trauma can foster at least some depolarization and social cohesion, especially when elites emphasize inclusive democratic values rather than fear or blame.

However, most studies find that these unifying effects are relatively short-lived. As the immediacy of the threat fades, partisan divisions re-emerge, often stronger than before (Jacobson 2007). Comparative research also shows that the strength and duration of rally effects depend on the clarity of the external enemy, elite consensus, and public trust in institutions (Baker & Oneal 2001).

In essence, the rally-around-the-flag phenomenon captures a temporary depolarization—which can foster solidarity, empathy, and inclusion at the societal level.

On the flip side, two accompanying phenomena severely constrain this unifying potential. On the one hand, while the ingroup identity of the threatened community might strengthen, outsiders or members of outgroups –especially those symbolically associated with the perpetrators—often face heightened prejudice, suspicion, and exclusion. Research following 9/11 in the United States found a sharp increase in anti-Muslim and anti-Arab sentiment (Kalkan, Layman, & Uslaner 2009), accompanied by spikes in hate crimes and widespread stereotyping of Muslims as violent or untrustworthy (Sides & Gross 2013). Similar patterns appear elsewhere. After terrorist incidents in Europe, non-Muslim citizens report greater social distance from Muslim neighbors and more support for restrictive immigration or surveillance policies (Echebarria-Echabe & Fernández-Guede 2006; Vasilopoulos et al. 2018). Studies in Israel show that repeated exposure to terrorism heightens hostility toward Palestinian citizens of Israel while leaving attitudes toward other minorities largely unchanged (Canetti-Nisim, Ariely & Halperin 2008).

On the other hand, while such threats can blur partisan lines in the short term, with citizens coalescing around leaders who promise protection and prioritize security (Hetherington & Nelson 2003; Davis & Silver 2004), this same research also demonstrates that acute threats can trigger authoritarian predispositions and a longing for order and protection (Feldman et al. 1997; Hetherington & Suhay 2011). Under conditions of perceived existential danger, citizens tend to prioritize security over liberty, endorse strong leadership, and accept restrictions on civil rights (Huddy et al. 2007; Merolla et al. 2009). This literature identifies the psychological foundations of democratic fragility: fear and threat reduce tolerance for dissent and increase support for coercive, security-oriented policies.

In sum, the overall insight of this body of research is that terrorism and mortality salience initiate a two-stage trajectory: first a period of affective depolarization rooted in shared existential threat, typically followed by a resurgence of societal and political polarization as anxiety is politicized and filtered through existing cleavages.

What can yet another study on the consequences of terrorism add to a very rich literature? Our study makes several contributions to research on threat, democracy, and polarization. First, we examine Israel—a society which was already deeply divided before the attack, e.g. over judicial reform and over religious issues (see below). This case thus provides a hard test of the claim that national crisis might foster unity. Second, by using a two-wave panel design that surveys the same individuals a few months before and 8–11 months after the October 7 Hamas attack, we move

beyond short-term rally effects to capture medium-term changes in societal polarization, intergroup affect and policy attitudes. Third, our within-person design allows for stronger causal inference about the effects of exposure to collective trauma on attitudes, rather than relying on cross-sectional comparisons or fictitious threat manipulations. Admittedly, several studies have used unexpected survey events (e.g. Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno & Hernández 2020) to assess short-term attitudinal shifts after terrorist attacks, which are more powerful in terms of causal identification. However, while designs using the interrupted survey method appear to be methodologically cleaner, most of the time they can only capture the short-term effects of terrorism and cannot capture within-person change.[7] Finally, by linking theories of existential threat and societal and political polarization, the study sheds light on when shared crisis brings citizens together and when it instead deepens existing divisions.

Case study: A torn country caught by an external threat

On the eve of the October 7 attack, the Israeli public was highly polarized after an extremely turbulent political period. Between April 2019 and November 2022 Israel held five national elections (Shamir and Rahat 2022, Rahat et al. 2025). This unprecedented instability centered largely around Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, and his dominance in Israeli politics (Lavi et al. 2022). This prolonged period of severe political instability resulted in increasing levels of affective polarization between coalition and opposition supporters, (which largely corresponds to the division between the right-wing and center-left voters) that peaked ahead of the November 2022 election (Amitai et al. 2025). Following the election, the newly formed government sought to pass a judicial reform that aimed to overhaul Israel's judiciary, and the political regime more broadly. This reform became a further divisive issue for the two political camps and sparked the largest mass protest in Israel's history to date, which lasted for almost 40 weeks in a row. This situation only exacerbated polarization between the right and center-left camps (see Hobolt et al. (2021) for evidence that significant political events generate affective polarization.).

The internal rift in Israel was so severe that the Israeli intelligence and the Minister of Defense warned repeatedly that Israel's enemies were observing and might take advantage of the situation to attack Israel (Azulai 2023; Wasserman 2023). Despite these alarms, on October 7, 2023 Israel was caught completely by surprise. Hamas executed one of the most lethal terrorist attacks globally in recent decades, with over 1,200 Israelis murdered, hundreds more injured and raped, and

[7] Research on the Charlie Hebdo attacks, for instance, found brief changes in trust, prejudice, and support for protective policies (Brouard, Vasilopoulos, & Foucault, 2018). Similar designs have traced effects on authoritarianism and institutional trust (Vlandas & Halikiopoulou, 2022; Nägel, 2023).

another 251 individuals abducted to the Gaza Strip (Pitcho 2025). Many Israeli Jews have been experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, or anxiety (Levi-Belz et al. 2024).

Immediately following the attack Israel, launched a military operation against Hamas, that turned into a two-year war (ending on October 10, 2025), also involving Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah, and Yemeni Houthis. This war included a massive reserve recruitment, affecting tens of thousands of Israeli households, and a constant threat from ballistic missile, rockets, and explosive drones across Israel. In sum, the conditions in Israel provide a unique setting to test inter-group affect in a highly polarized society under an extreme and prolonged security threat.

Hypotheses

We pre-registered our hypotheses with AsPredicted, pre-registration protocol #182913. Below we rearrange the order of our hypotheses to streamline the structure of our empirical examination. First, we examine changes in societal attitudes, affect, and policy preferences over time. Then we test hypotheses relating to (de)polarization based on the literature surveyed above.

Over time attitudinal change

We expected a decrease in affect for threatening out-groups, i.e., Palestinians and Arabs as well toward in-groups who are perceived as associated with them (H1a) such as the left-wingers (viewed as supporting the Palestinian cause), and in-groups that are viewed as undermining the national war effort: Ultra-Orthodox Jews (for refusing to take part in it). Conversely, we expect an increase in affect for the largest in-group of Jews (H1b).

When it comes to policy attitudes, we expect that opposition to the peace process will increase after the attack, as it can be seen as a protective policy (H1c). On the judicial reform and Supreme Court, we do not expect Israelis to change sides, but rather to adopt a more moderate position.[8] Finally, attitudes toward the role of religion in public life are not expected to change as this is not a protective policy (H1d).

In terms of ideological identification, we expect a decline in left-wing identity (H1e). A left-wing identity is associated with support for peace with the Palestinian and more dovish views, which we expect people to move away from following the October 7 attack.

Polarization and Depolarization

As discussed, the literature is optimistic about the potential short-term effects of de-polarization. The case we study is a tough one for three reasons. First, Israeli political leaders did not engage in

[8] One possibility is that affect for reform supporters will increase because people will be more open to executive aggrandizement in the face of threat.

a discourse of de-escalation. Second, the Israeli society was highly polarized before the attack. Finally, our study spans a time period of eight to eleven months post-attack when the potential for unity might already have evaporated, societal actors might have regrouped and polarization might have resurged. On the flip side, given that a high mortality threat persisted throughout this period, it is possible that short-term effects persisted.

We expect that overall differences in affect between rival societal and political in-groups will decrease after the attack (H2a), while increasing when it comes to Jews and Arabs (H2b). In addition, we expect affective polarization between in- and out-groups in Israeli society to decrease after the attacks (H2c).

Finally, we expect heterogeneous effects depending on the level of exposure to the exogenous shock. Specifically, those who were most impacted by the attack – those who felt most traumatized, who lost someone in the war or have a family member serve in the army—will be more affected by (de)polarization than those who were less affected personally (H3).

We turn next to describe our data and method.

Research Design

Data

We use data from a two-wave online survey administered by Panel4All. Ethics approval was obtained by the Ethics committee of McGill University (REB No. 432-0518). The first wave was administered to a representative sample of the Jewish Israeli population, with quotas for geographic region, religiosity, gender, and age approximating the most recent census estimates. The choice for Israeli Jews was made because no Israeli survey firm could guarantee a high quality two wave sample for the ethnic minority of Arab citizens of Israel. The first wave was fielded between May 30, 2023, and July 6, 2023. The second wave was administered between May 28, 2024, and July 8, 2024, with samples of 3,120 and 2,384 (returning) respondents, respectively, resulting in a 76% retention. We excluded respondents who failed a basic attention check, resulting in the loss of 252 respondents. Appendix section A summarizes sample socio-demographics.

Method

We launched the first wave with the intention of studying a wide range of Israelis' political attitudes originally planned to study the judicial reform in Israel, but including sentiments towards different groups, positions on pressing current political issues, and democratic attitudes. Following October 7, we decided to return to our respondents and investigate changes in their opinions. As this

research was not initially designed for this two-wave study, it has a few limitations which we elaborate on below.

Our two-way panel design allows us to capture the attitudes of the same respondents before and after the events of October 7 and into the war. In the first survey wave, we asked our respondents questions about their ideology, affect toward various groups in Israeli society and the Palestinians, about political groups and parties, and about their policy preferences regarding the judicial reform, the peace process, and state-religion relations. In the second wave, we asked the exact same questions, in addition to a host of items related to October 7 and the war. Our analysis focuses on the between- and within-subject overtime changes on those items. Our survey items are listed in Appendix Section B.

In addition, to explore (de)polarization we created affective polarization variables that account for our respondents' relevant group membership. First, we examined the affect gap between societal cleavage groups generally including Arabs/Jews; Right/Leftwingers; Judicial Reform supporters/Opponents; Secular/Religious Jews; Secular/ Ultra-Orthodox Jews. Second, for each respondent-wave we took the affect difference between their in-group and out-group (based on their self-identification in wave 1), which then allowed us to test the change in this difference over time. We did this for the following pairs of social groups: (1) Supporters of closest & furthest party; (2) Right & Left wingers; (3) Judicial Reform supporters & Opponents; (4) Secular & Religious Jews; (5) Secular & Ultra-Orthodox Jews. In a similar manner, we also looked at the affect difference toward Prime Minister Netanyahu and opposition Leader Lapid, by respondents vote for (6) Coalition & opposition parties; and vote for (7) the parties these politicians head (Likud & Yesh Atid). [9]

To estimate the change in attitudes after the October 7 attack and the war (the differences between our two survey waves) we estimate the following regression: [10]

$$(1)\quad Y_{it}=b_0+b_1*wave_i+\varepsilon_{it}$$

[9] To exemplify, let's say a respondent who identified as a right-winger had a score of 9 for right-wingers and a score of 5 for left- wingers on the affect scale (0-10), in wave 1. The affective polarization score would be 4=9-5. Then in wave 2 the affect scores of the same respondent are 7 and 5, respectively. The resulting affective polarization score would be 2=7-5. The difference in affective polarization over time, which is estimated in Figure 3, would then be -2 = 2-4.

[10] We kept the dependent variables in their original units for easier interpretability. The tradeoff is that coefficients are not comparable across models with outcomes on different scales.

Where b_0 is the mean of our dependent variables in the first wave, and b_1 captures the average change in our dependent variables between waves 1 and 2. We use respondent clustered standard errors.

We also conducted some exploratory analysis of heterogeneous effects by the two main camps in Israeli politics. We operationalized this measure in two ways. First, using the self-placement ideology scale, we coded those who self-identified 1-4 as "left-center" and those who identified as 5-7 as "right". As an alternative measure, we classified as "opposition voters" those who voted for parties not part of the coalition, and as "coalition voters" does who voted for parties who were.[11] Notably, these classifications overlap but are not identical ($r = 0.68$, $p < .001$). See Appendix Table A2 for the distribution of vote in our sample and comparison to the 2022 national election outcomes.

In line with our pre-registered expectations, we examine heterogeneous effects of (de)polarization by the immediate personal impacts of the attack based on our second wave variables. Specifically we use the following moderators subjective trauma, having a close person die on October 7 or in the war, and having a family member serve in the military in the war. We estimate the following model:[12]

$$(2)\quad Y_{it}=b_0+b_1 wave_{it}+b_2 moderator_i+b_3(wave_{it}\times moderator_i)+\varepsilon_{it}$$

Our dependent variables are the affective polarization variables described. b_0 is the predicted probability of Y_i among the reference category of the moderator (below median trauma; no personal loss; family member did not serve) in wave 1, b_1 is the change for the baseline category of the moderator in wave 2, b_2 is the difference between the groups defined by the moderator in wave 1, and b_3 captures the change over time in the dependent variables Y_i between the groups defined by the moderator over time (for example between those who served in the military and those who did not). To test hypothesis H3, we focus on b_3 the interaction term

Methodologically, our study leverages a powerful design to examine attitudinal change in the wake of a crisis. The October 2023 Hamas attack occurred between our two survey waves that were fielded among the same sample of Israeli Jews. This timing poses the exposure to an unanticipated national trauma—the attack, the ensuing war, and the mass mobilization around it— as a bundled

[11] Opposition parties: Yesh Atid, HaMahane HaMamlachti, Yisrael Beiteinu, Ra'am, Hadash-Ta'al, HaAvoda, Meretz, Balad. Coalition parties: Likud, Hatzionut Hadatit, Shas, Yahadut Hatora, Jewish Home.

[12] This model is algebraically equivalent to a first difference model:

$$\Delta Y_i=\beta_1+\beta_3 Serve_i+\Delta\varepsilon_i,$$

where β_1 is the change among the reference category of the moderator, and 3captures how much *extra* change servers experienced relative to non-servers.

treatment largely exogenous to individual attitudes. By re-interviewing respondents eight to eleven months after the initial survey, we capture medium-term adjustments rather than only the short-lived rally-around-the-flag responses typically observed in post-attack studies. Unlike cross-sectional or interrupted-survey designs, our within-person data allow us to identify genuine attitude change, separating crisis-driven shifts from stable predispositions.

Beyond this methodological leverage, the study provides a stress test for theories of polarization and unity: Israel entered the crisis deeply divided over judicial reform, making it an unusually difficult case for any expectation of societal depolarization. The design thus enables us to assess whether collective threat can bridge entrenched divisions, reinforce them, or transform them in new ways—offering both analytical leverage and theoretical insight into the dynamics of polarization under existential threat.

Results

Attitudinal change: Israelis became more right-leaning, hawkish, and less affectionate

We begin by examining our expectations regarding the change of attitudes of Israeli Jews on several dimensions following the bundled treatment: Ideology, divisive policy issues, and affect toward different societal groups (see section on changes). Table 1 below summarizes the results.

Starting with change in ideological self-placement (model 1), we find a minor move right-ward of 0.095 scale points (equal to 1.8 per cent) on the 1-7 ideological scale, from a baseline of 5.22 before October 7. While most Israelis did not move ideologically (see Appendix Figure C1), Figure 1 shows that this change occurred exclusively among the center-left identifiers (or opposition voters), who moved right-ward by 9 per cent (b = 0.31) (or 4 per cent; b = 0.16, respectively). This supports our expectation regarding a decline in left-wing identification. Strikingly, rightists (or coalition) supporters have not become more right-leaning or conservative, possibly due to ceiling effects (the mean ideology among right-wingers or coalition voters were 6.16 and 6.23, respectively).

Table 1: Change in ideology and policy attitudes

	(1) Ideology (Left to Right)	(2) Support renewal of peace process	(3) Importance of renewing the peace process	(4) Importance of *not* renewing the peace process	(5) Support judicial reform	(6) Government over Supreme Court	(7) Trust in Supreme Court has too little power	(8) Supreme Court has too little power	(9) Jewish tradition governs most areas	(10) Importance of Jewish tradition in *few* areas	(11) Importance of Jewish tradition in *most* areas
Wave 2	0.095***	-0.138***	-2.432***	0.605***	-0.036***	-0.013	-0.020	0.028	0.016	0.372***	0.131
	(0.019)	(0.010)	(0.148)	(0.125)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.008)	(0.076)	(0.102)
Constant	5.215***	0.450***	7.459***	6.003***	0.520***	0.470***	2.284***	1.636***	0.341***	8.055***	6.738***
	(0.035)	(0.011)	(0.063)	(0.099)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.022)	(0.015)	(0.010)	(0.069)	(0.081)
Observations	4,134	4,264	1,553	2,533	3,824	3,428	4,058	3,958	4,264	1,456	2,706
Adj. R2	0.001	0.020	0.180	0.008	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.011	0.000

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

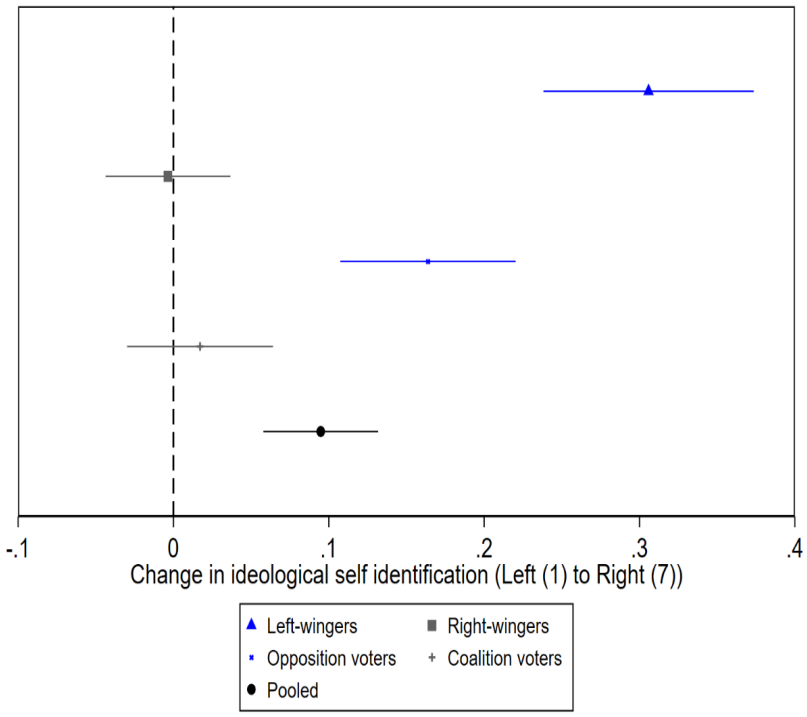


Figure 1: Change in ideological self-identification by baseline ideological camp and 2022 vote.

We also examined overall change in policy preferences regarding the pre-October 7 pressing political issues. Specifically, we examined the change in policy attitudes toward the peace process with the Palestinians, the judicial reform, and state-religion relations.

As expected, we find that support for the renewal of the peace process plunged by 14 per cent (b=-0.14, $p < 0.001$) from 44 per cent to 31 per cent (see Table 2). However, interestingly, while this decrease occurred more among opposition voters (55 per cent), in terms of ideology, this change was more common among the very small group of right-wingers who supported the peace process in wave 1 (62 per cent).[13]

Table 2: Changes in positions on the peace process, before and after the October 7 attack. N=2,251

		Wave 2		
		Renew peace process	Do not renew peace process	**Total**
Wave 1	Renew peace process	26%	18%	**45%**
	Do not renew peace process	4%	51%	**55%**
	Total	**31%**	**69%**	**100%**

[13] In the first wave, 401 right-wingers (29 per cent of right-wingers in the sample) indicated support for renewing the peace process. Of them, 236 individuals changed their mind in wave 2.

Moreover, among those who remained supportive of the renewal of the peace process, its importance sharply decreased by 33 per cent (b=-2.43, $p < 0.001$), while the importance of not renewing it among those who stayed opposed increased by 10 per cent (b=0.61, $p < 0.001$). In general, this attitudinal shift reflects that Israelis became less divided with respect to the renewal of the peace process with 69 per cent opposing it (compared to 56 per cent before October 7), and those who support the renewal of the peace process finding it less important. This finding confirms earlier findings on the importance of protective policies. The rejection of any peace process with Palestine effectively became such a protective stance. It also seems to be the only issue on which Israelis grew closer together.

Looking at positions on the judicial reform we find minor changes. On average, support for the judicial reform decreased slightly (b=-0.04, $p < 0.001$). However, preferences over who should have the final word when the government and the Supreme Court disagree, trust in the Supreme Court and evaluation of its power remain stable.[14]

Yet, these small or non-significant changes mask important intra-camp shifts. While most Israelis did not switch sides on the Judicial reform (86%), opponents and supporters of the judicial reform became *less* entrenched in their positions as Table 3 shows, thus this division was somewhat attenuated. By contrast, Israelis who opposed the reform increased their trust in the Supreme Court and perception of too little power even further, while supporters of the reform exhibit opposite trends. These results provide partial support to our expectations (we expected opinions to come closer together).

Regarding the prevalence of the Jewish religious tradition in public life, we observe no change in policy positions (model 9 in Table 1), confirming that state-religion is not viewed as a protective policy. Yet, among those who preferred religious traditions in fewer areas (64% at the baseline), there is an increase (b=0.37, $p < 0.001$) in the importance they assign to this position, from the already extremely high baseline of 8.43 (SD = 1.71).

[14] At the pre-October 7 baseline 52% thought the Supreme Court should have the final say; the mean trust in the Supreme Court was 2.28 on a 1-4 scale.

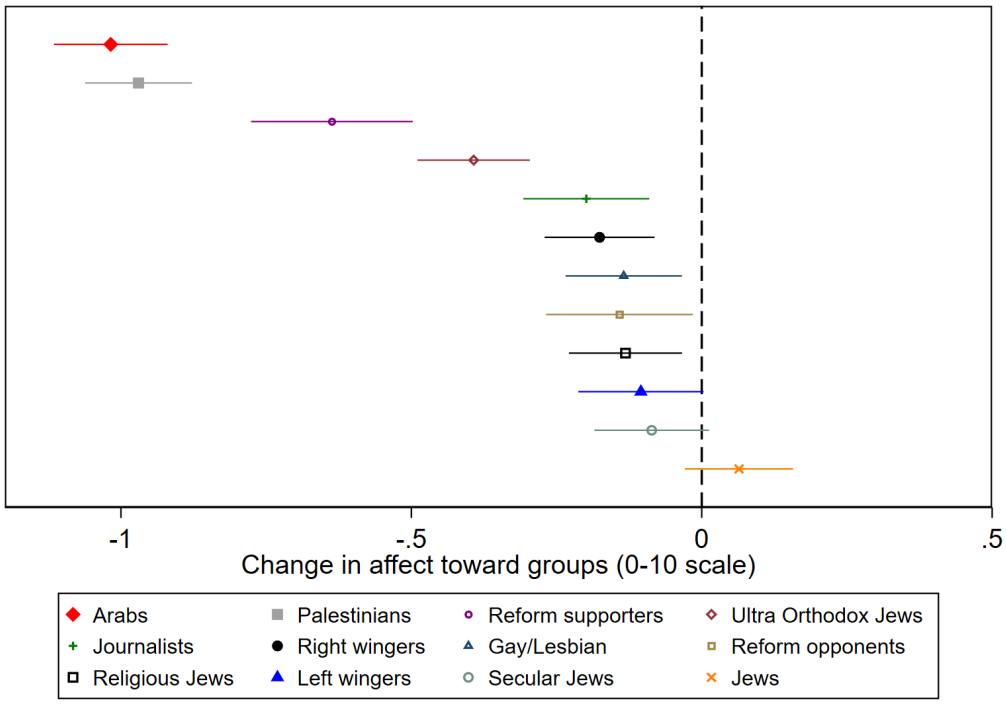
Table 3: Change in attitudes regarding the judicial reform and the Supreme Court among reform opponents and supporters

	(1) Judicial reform support	(2) Govt. v. Supreme Court	(3) Trust in Supreme Court	(4) SC power (too little)
Wave 2	0.090***	0.027**	0.029	0.097***
	(0.023)	(0.010)	(0.021)	(0.019)
Judicial reform support (Wave 1)	2.169***	0.763***	-1.275***	-0.606***
	(0.022)	(0.016)	(0.035)	(0.026)
Wave 2 # Judicial reform support (Wave 1)	-0.350***	-0.046**	-0.067*	-0.114***
	(0.036)	(0.017)	(0.028)	(0.029)
Constant	1.390***	0.073***	2.957***	1.945***
	(0.016)	(0.009)	(0.026)	(0.016)
Observations	3,801	3,338	3,909	3,827
Adjusted R-squared	0.698	0.550	0.416	0.240

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Lastly, we examine the dynamics of inter-group affect in the aftermath of October 7 and the Israel-Hamas war (see Figure 2). Using the feeling thermometer question: "*Please indicate how much you dislike or like each of the following groups. 0 indicates you dislike them a lot and 10 indicates you like them a lot.*" We find that affect toward many different societal groups decreased, with the largest decrease observed toward Arabs (b=-1.02, $p < 0.001$) Palestinians (b=-0.97, $p < 0.001$), and Ultra-Orthodox Jews (b=-0.39, $p < 0.001$) as expected. Unexpectedly, we also find decrease in affect toward reform supporters (b=-0.64, $p < 0.001$). Contrary to our expectations, affect toward the Jewish in-group has not changed (possibly due to a very high pre-attack baseline of 8.53, SD=1.91): Finally, affect toward secular Jews remained unchanged, as did affect toward left-wingers (counter to our prediction). Appendix Table D1 presents the regression results.

Figure 2: Change in affect toward different societal groups



In sum, our analysis thus far reveals some attitudinal change following the October 7 attack and the Israel-Hamas war. On the whole, Israelis became more right-leaning (as a result of left-wingers and center identifiers moving ideologically to the right), and more hawkish toward the Palestinians (opposing the renewal of the peace process). We do not observe overall change in attitudes toward the role of Jewish religious tradition in public life, and the judicial reform and Supreme Court, however we identify more moderate stances among both baseline opponents and supporters of the reform. These indicators suggest that Israeli Jews grew somewhat closer ideologically and on the protective policy issue related to the threat. Our analysis of change also shows that Israelis became less affectionate towards a host of societal groups within the Israeli Jewish in-group and outside of it.

We turn next to examine the depolarizing effects of our bundled treatment, namely whether the affection gap and affective polarization between rival groups shrunk (or widened).

Party- and religiosity-based affective polarization intensified; Affective depolarization over judicial reform

To examine trends in social cohesion (H2a-c) we start by looking at the change in the *affect gap* for pairs of rival groups and leaders (not taking in-/out-group membership into account): Jews & Arabs; right- & left-wingers, judicial reform supporters & opponents, different religious groups

(by self-reported religiosity). We also examine in an exploratory manner the affect gap between Prime Minister Netanyahu and opposition leader Lapid.

Looking at our pooled sample (Figure 4), we find that the gap in affect toward Jews and Arabs increased the most (b=1.12, $p < 0.001$), followed by the affect gap toward Ultra-Orthodox and secular Jews (b=0.33, $p < 0.001$). However, the gap in affect toward right and left wingers, and religious and secular Jews did not change. Remarkably, the difference in affect toward reform supporters and opponents decreased (b=-0.48, $p < 0.001$)[15], constituting the only case of societal depolarization on a highly polarizing issue before the attack. Thus, while opinion on the judicial reform did not move, the polarization around the issue when thinking about reform supporters and opponents did decrease. We also find no change in the affect gap toward PM Netanyahu and the opposition leader Lapid. Appendix Table D2 summarized the results.

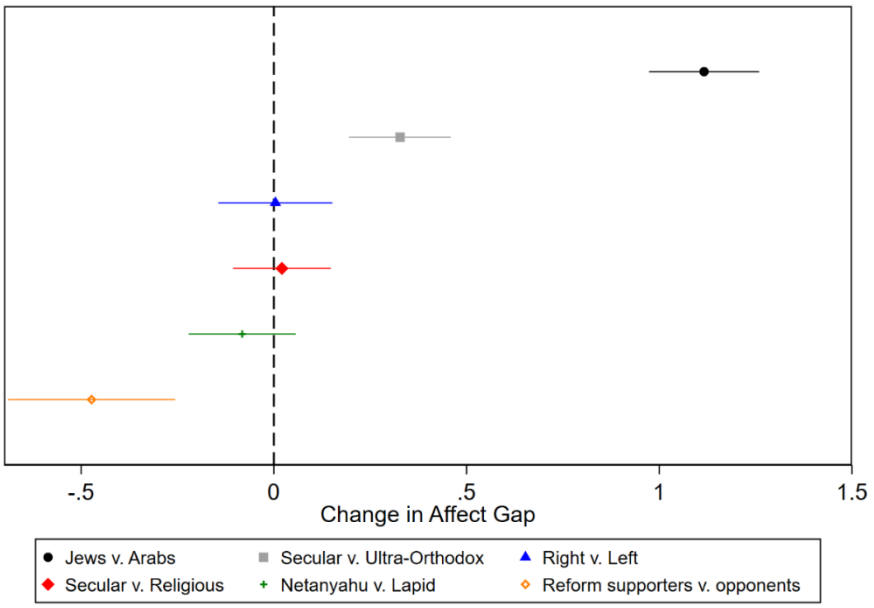


Figure 4: Change in difference in affect gap toward rival social groups

Next, we examined changes in the affective polarization for these pairs of social groups and leaders, by taking into account respondents' group membership (see Method section for a description of these outcome variables). This is a test of the difference in differences. We find mixed trends of both polarization and depolarization, see Figure 5.

[15] This is driven by a sharper decrease in affect toward reform supporters, which brings the mean affect toward opponents and supporters closer together in wave 2.

The affective polarization comparing affect of the supporters of the closest and supporters of the least close party increased (b=0.76, $p < 0.001$),[16] as did affective polarization between the secular and Ultra-Orthodox (b=0.26, $p < 0.001$). By contrast, we observe another case of depolarization toward Netanyahu and Lapid affect and between coalition and opposition voters ((b=-0.25, $p < 0.001$), and Likud and Yesh Atid voters (b=-0.30, $p < 0.001$). Appendix Figure C2 shows that this depolarization stems from voters of the camps they head, becoming less affectionate toward them, rather than due to a rallying effect. Affective polarization between the left-center and right identifiers, and the secular and religious has not changed (Appendix Table D3 summarizes these results).

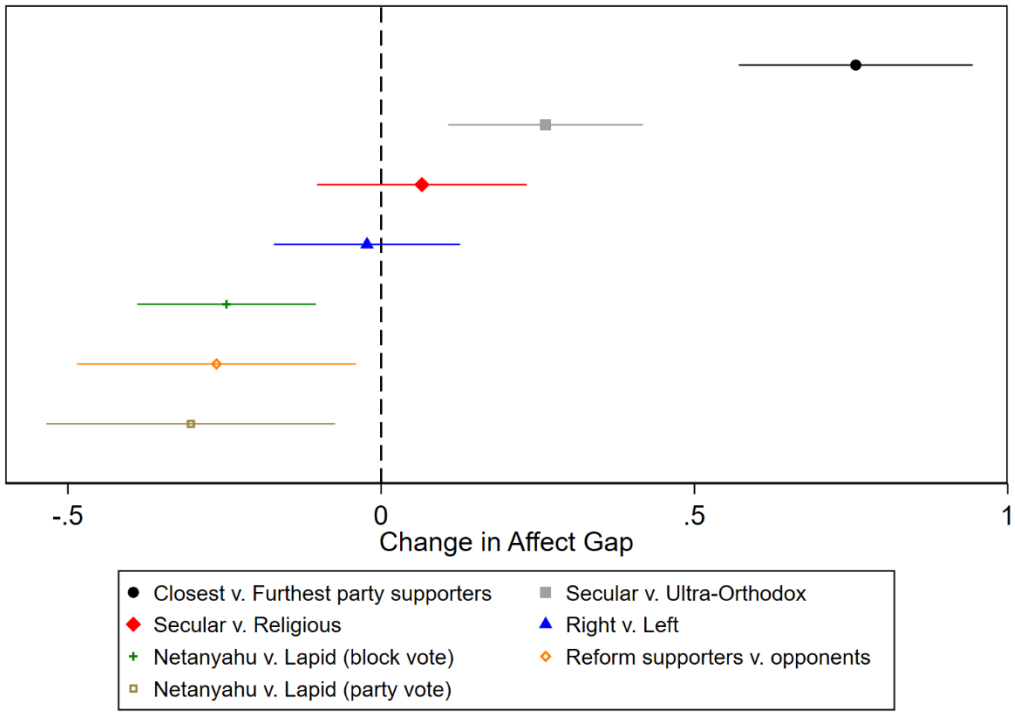


Figure 5: Change in affective polarization between rival groups (accounting for in- out- group membership or vote)

Differential exposure in terms of subjective trauma, personal loss or military service generally does not moderate changes in affective polarization

The October 7 attack in and of itself had a profound, even if mixed, and lasting effect on the entire Israeli population, as evidenced by our results so far. Additionally, the war that followed has also

[16] We look at the change in difference between affect toward the *supporters* of the party one feels closest to and affect toward the *supporters* of the party one feels least close to. Respondents who indicated higher affect for the supporters of the least close party than the supporters of the closest party (for whom the difference in affective polarization in at least one wave was negative) were excluded from this analysis, because these are nonsensical responses. This resulted in n=1,557.

affected most Israelis in different ways. Importantly, we treat the attack and the war as a bundled exogenous treatment (non-randomized). Therefore, to investigate possible causal drivers of the changes in affective polarization (H3), we explore heterogeneous effects using moderators that differentiate the degree of impact on Israelis: subjective sense of trauma (M = 7.798, SD=2.37); having lost a family member or a close friend in the war (15 per cent),[17] and having a family member serve in the military during the war (55 per cent). The first moderator relates exclusively to the October 7 attack, while the other two take into account the ensuing war as well (see exact wording in Appendix B).

To test hypothesis H3, we focus on the interaction term (b_3 in equation 2 above) which captures the change over time (from Wave 1 to Wave 2) in our outcome variables for those personally affected (i.e., traumatized, experiencing personal loss or serving in the military) and those who did not. This is an estimate of how much the wave-to-wave change differs between the two groups. Figure 6 plots this coefficient.

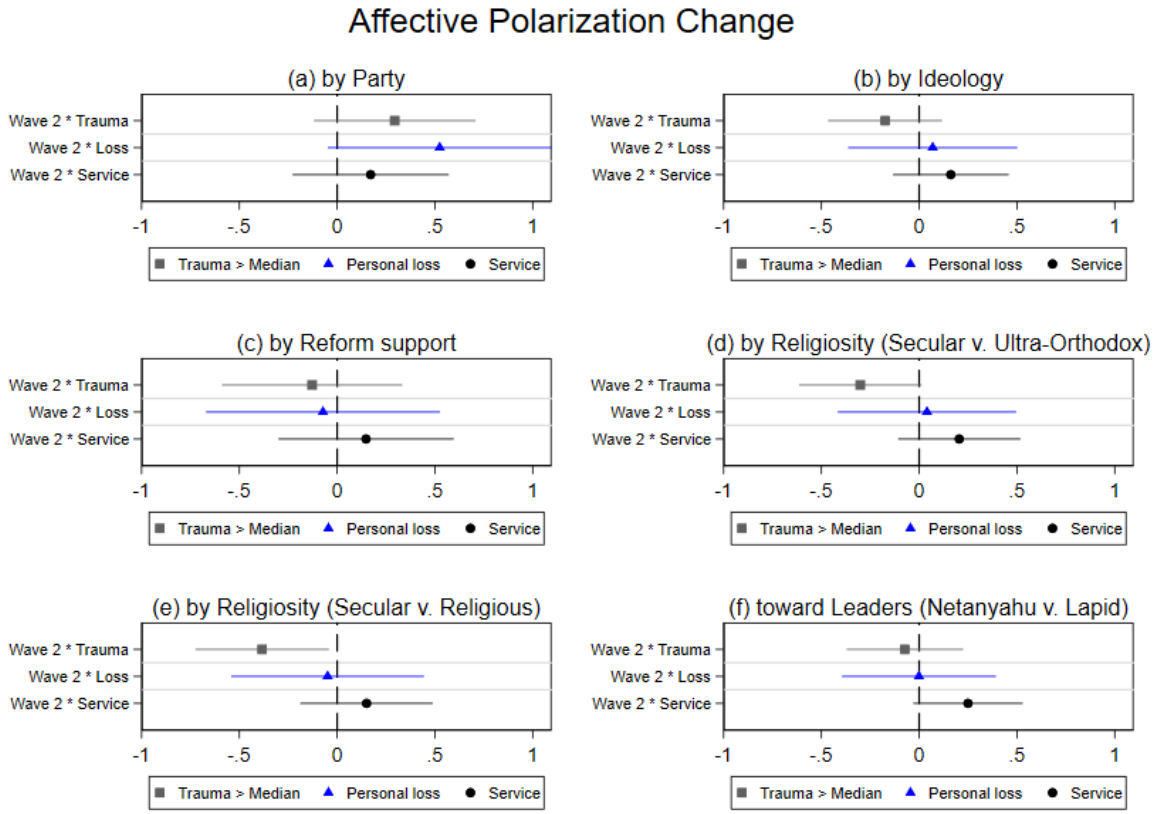
Across our multiple models we do not find moderation effects of (additional) personal exposure on affective polarization. In other words, high subjective trauma related to October 7, personal loss in the attack and war, or having a family member serve in the military during the war do not moderate the changes in affective polarization between waves. The only exception is subjective trauma in the case of affective polarization between secular and religious Jews, which decreased ($b=-0.38$, $p < 0.05$) among those who self-reported experiencing above median trauma score (panel (e)). We take this result as a statistical outlier, rather than a substantive finding.

These findings stand in contrast to our expectation (H3) that differential exposure would moderate affective (de)polarization. We take these results to suggest that the effect of the October 7 attack and the Israel-Hamas war on affective polarization (which we report above) were mostly uniform across the Israeli Jewish population, and any additional personal experience did not have an additive effect. Appendix Table D4 presents full regression results.[18]

[17] Given this high share, we assume that respondents referred to having a close friend die in broad terms.

[18] As a robustness test, we also coded subjective trauma into a different specification of a dummy variable where those who indicated the highest level of trauma (10) get 1 and the rest are coded as 0. Results remain robust.

Figure 6: Interaction terms of the moderators and the wave: the change in our affective polarization measures by subjective trauma, personal loss, and military service.



Conclusion

This study examines whether the October 7 terror attack and the ensuing war altered the attitudes of Israeli Jews and, more specifically, whether these events fostered greater unity—a form of depolarization—in line with the rally-around-the-flag theory and the broader notion that shared external threats might promote social cohesion. While this is a hard case for depolarization, our analysis is aided by a powerful design using a unique two-wave panel data collected before and after the October 7 attack. Overall, we investigate changes in policy preferences, ideology and affective orientations toward various social groups, as well as (de)polarization.

Our findings reveal a complex pattern of social dynamics. In ideological terms, Israeli Jews moved somewhat closer together, namely they moved to the right: center-left respondents shifted modestly rightward, reducing the ideological divide. Similarly, convergence emerged around opposition to renewing the peace process. Relatedly, affect toward Arabs and Palestinians decreased the most, indicating that ending peace negotiations became a protective policy. This means that the events unified the Jewish Israeli public around what is identified as or related to the "external threat". By contrast, attitudes toward the state–religion and judicial reform policies

remained largely stable, suggesting limits to post-crisis attitudinal change.

In terms of inter-group relations, measures of social group affect gap and affective polarization yielded mixed results: while polarization increased between some groups, it notably decreased between supporters and opponents of judicial reform—an instance of depolarization around a previously divisive issue. Relatedly, Israelis' attitudes toward the judicial reform grew closer, even if we do not observe switches in opinion between opposition and support. representing a localized instance of depolarization within a domain that had been among the most divisive in Israeli politics prior to the attack. Strikingly, the affect gap and the affective polarization between the secular and Ultra-Orthodox Jews increased significantly, despite the stability of preferences for state-religion relations.

We take these two opposite trends - decreased affective polarization between supporters and opponents of the judicial reform, and increased affective polarization between secular and Ultra-Orthodox Jews – to indicate the shifts in salience of divisive political issues during the war. While the judicial reform was put on pause and took a backstage, the differential share of the national and military burden, became very dominant in public and political discourse. Patterns of affective polarization seem to have followed suit. This also potentially speaks to the crucial role of political elites in playing down or inciting social divisions.

Contrary to expectations, individual exposure to the October 7 events and the subsequent war—through trauma (which had low variance to begin with), personal loss, or family military service—did not significantly moderate these effects. This suggests that the observed attitudinal shifts and (de)polarization patterns reflect a broadly uniform reaction to a shared national crisis, rather than differential experiences of threat or loss.

Our study faces an inherent limitation in terms of causal identification due to the substantial time gap between the October 7 attack and the second survey wave, meaning that our post-event measures capture the effects of a bundled treatment that includes both the attack and the subsequent war. However, the advantage of this approach is that we are not constrained to measure the short-term changes of the terrorist attack and war, but to take a medium-term perspective. We see this also as an advantage from a theoretical perspective. We sought to disentangle these influences by testing moderators related specifically to the attack and to wartime experiences, finding that these factors did not sufficiently moderate the observed effects. Nonetheless, this design offers a valuable perspective on the evolution of social cohesion and (de)polarization after an extended period of acute external threat, thereby complementing existing research that tends to pick up some of the immediate post-crisis rally-around-the-flag dynamics.

These findings highlight both the integrative and divisive consequences of collective trauma and response to an enduring threat. While external threats can enhance social cohesion on salient protective policy, they may simultaneously exacerbate hostility toward political and societal out-groups and reinforce existing social cleavages. Additionally, new policy issues that emerge as somewhat related to the existential threat, may increase inter-group hostility, such as the increase in affective polarization between the secular and Ultra-Orthodox Jews.

Israel presents a case of a deeply divided society which experienced a moment of heightened polarization when the external threat materialized. The results caution against assuming that acute national crises automatically produce lasting unity, attenuating such polarization: aspects of solidarity may coexist with deepening exclusionary attitudes. For scholars of political behavior and conflict, this underscores the importance of distinguishing between ideological and policy-based convergence, affective depolarization, and the persistence of inter-group boundaries in post-crisis societies.

In the aftermath of the Israel-Hamas Gaza war, and given that we do not observe meaningful convergence in terms of the Judicial reform (although some moderation in positions was observed) and an increase in the polarization between the secular and Ultra-Orthodox, it is very likely that these divisive issues will keep on shaping the Israeli political debate and social fragmentation.

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Supplementary Materials for

Does war unify a divided country? Evidence from Israel

Contents

A Sample Socio-Demographics

Table A1: Sample Demographics

	Category	**Sample (N=2,098)**
Demographic		**Percent**
Gender	Female	51.67
	Male	48.33
Age group	18-25	7.91
	26-34	25.07
	35-44	22.35
	45-54	18.64
	55-64	17.87
	65-74	8.15
Education	Elementary school	2.00
	High school-partial	2.24
	High school-complete	22.89
	Post-secondary	22.75
	Academic-BA	33.67
	Academic-MA or higher	16.45
Religiosity	Secular	46.85
	Traditional	31.27
	Religious	13.35
	Ultra-orthodox	8.53
District	Center	28.17
	Haifa	14.25
	Jerusalem	9.29
	North	8.91
	South	13.39
	Tel Aviv	21.59
	The West Bank	4.39

Table A2: Distribution of reported vote in the 2022 national election and real election outcomes.

	Sample (n=1,924)	**2022 Election outcome***	**Coalition**
Party	**Percent**	**Percent**	
Likud	28.89	23.41	✓
Yesh Atid	20.78	17.79	X
Hatzionut Hadatit	14.71	10.84	✓
HaMahane HaMamlachti	14.16	9.08	12/10/23-9/6/24
Shas	5.17	8.25	✓
Yahadut Hatora	4.36	5.88	✓
HaAvoda (Labor)	4.44	3.69	X
Meretz	2.57	3.16	Did not pass
Yisrael Beiteinu	2.81	4.48	X
Jewish Home	1.87	1.19	Did not get seats
Hadash-Ta'al	0.18	3.75	Did not get seats
Balad	0.03	2.91	Did not get seats
Ra'am	0.03	4.07	
Total	**100.00**		

*Source: The Central Election Committee for the Election to the 25th Knesset. https://votes25.bechirot.gov.il/

B Questionnaire

Wave 1 + Wave 2 (repeating items)

Q129 1. How much do you oppose or support the proposed changes to the judicial system?

- o Strongly oppose (1)
- o Somewhat oppose (2)
- o Somewhat support (3)
- o Strongly support (4)
- o Don't know (9)

Q140 8. How much trust do you have in the Supreme Court?

- o Very high trust (1)
- o High trust (2)
- o Little trust (3)
- o No trust at all (4)
- o Don't know (9)

Q141 9. How would you rate the degree of power of Israel's Supreme Court?

- o Too much (1)
- o Right amount (2)
- o Too little (3)
- o Don't know (9)

Q131 3. When the government and the Supreme Court disagree, who should have the final word: the government OR the Supreme Court?

- o The Government (1)
- o The Supreme Court (2)
- o Don't know (3)

Q169 3. When the Supreme Court and the government disagree, who should have the final word: the Supreme Court OR the government?

- o The Supreme Court (1)
- o The Government (2)
- o Don't know (3)

Q174 29. Please indicate how much dislike or like each of the following groups. 0 indicates you dislike them a lot and 10 indicates you like them a lot.

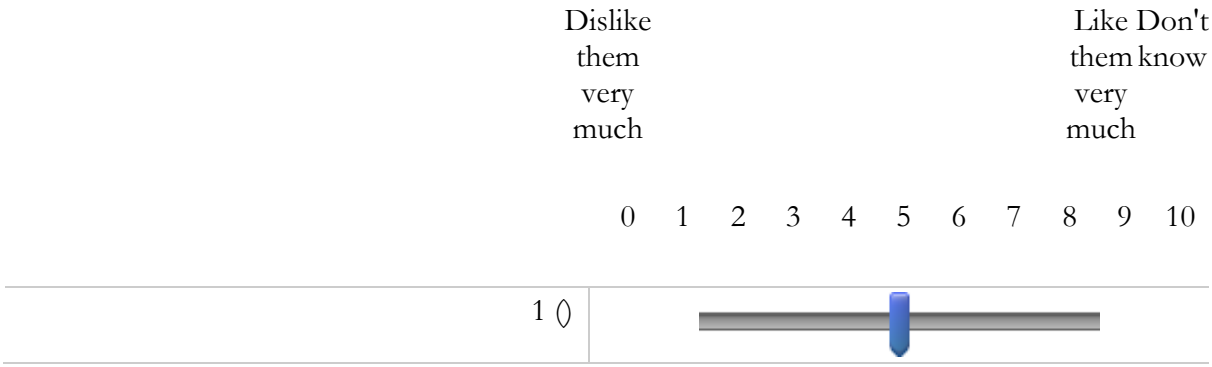
	Dislike a lot										Like a lot
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Right-wingers ()	
Left-wingers ()	
Palestinians ()	
Arabs ()	
Journalists ()	
Jews ()	
Reform supporters ()	
Reform opponents ()	
Gay/Lesbians ()	
Ultra-Orthodox Jews ()	
Secular Jews ()	
Religious Jews ()	

Q132 Which ONE of the following political parties do you feel CLOSEST to? (Please select the option that best applies)

- Likud (1)
- Yesh Atid (6)
- HaMahane HaMamlachti (2)
- Hatzionut Hadatit (8)
- Shas (13)
- Yahadut Hatora (9)
- Yisrael Beiteinu (5)
- Ra'am (15)
- Hadash-Ta'al (16)
- HaAvoda (3)
- Meretz (4)
- Balad (12)
- Jewish Home (7)
- Other (17)
- None of the above (14)

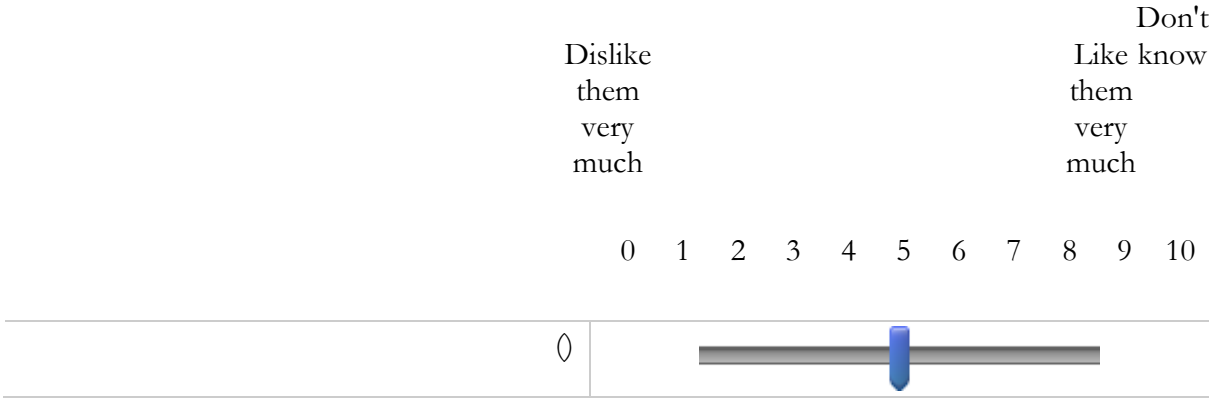
Q133 To what extent do you like or dislike supporters of ${Q132/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means you " Dislike them very much" and 10 means you "Like them very much"?



Q134 32. Which ONE of the following political parties do you not feel AT ALL close to? (Please select the option that best applies)

- Likud (1)
- Yesh Atid (5)
- Hatzionut Hadatit (6)
- HaMahane HaMamlachti (2)
- Shas (10)
- Yahadut Hatora (7)
- Yisrael Beiteinu (4)
- HaAvoda (3)
- Ra'am (headed by Mansour Abbas) (11)

Q135 33. To what extent do you like or dislike supporters of ${Q134/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means you "Dislike them very much" and 10 means you "Like them very much"?



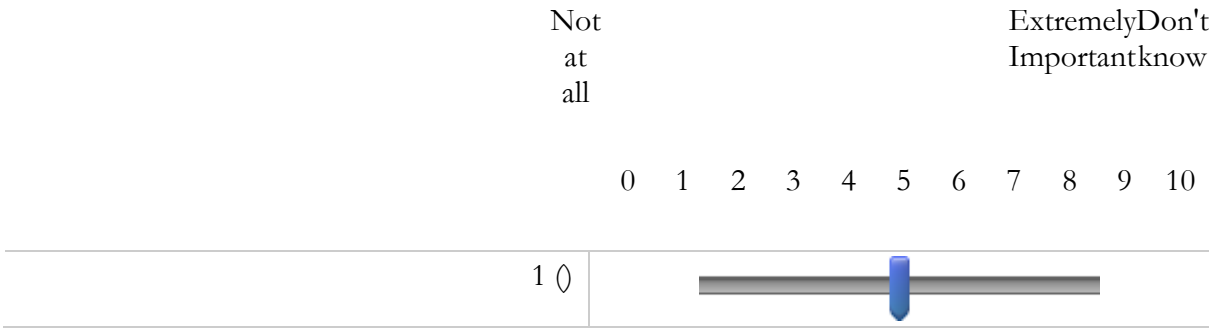
jewish_govern Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view? (Choose one)

Most areas of public life in Israel should be governed by Jewish religious tradition (1)

Only a few areas of public life in Israel should be governed by Jewish religious (4)

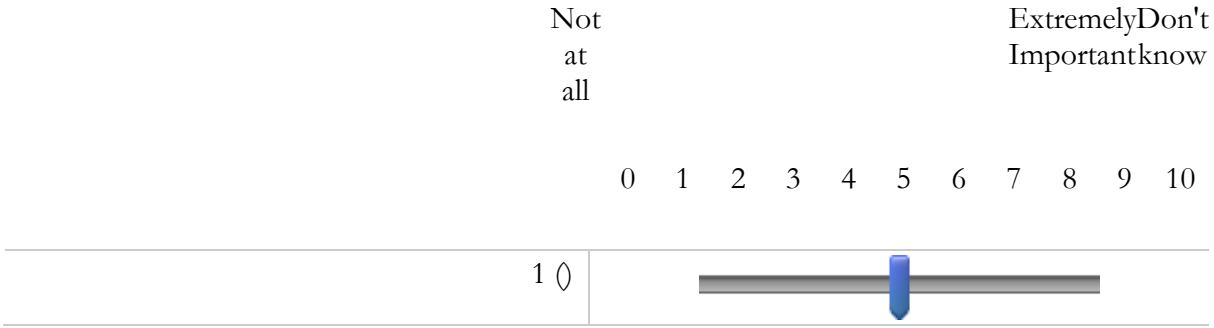
[Display This Question: If jewish_govern = 1]

jewish_govern_imp1 How important is it to you that most areas of public life in Israel be governed by Jewish religious tradition? Rate your response on a scale where 0 means "not at all" and 10 means "extremely important".



[Display This Question: If jewish_govern = 4]

jewish_govern_imp2 How important is it to you that only a few areas of public life in Israel be governed by Jewish religious tradition? Rate your response on a scale where 0 means "not at all" and 10 means "extremely important".

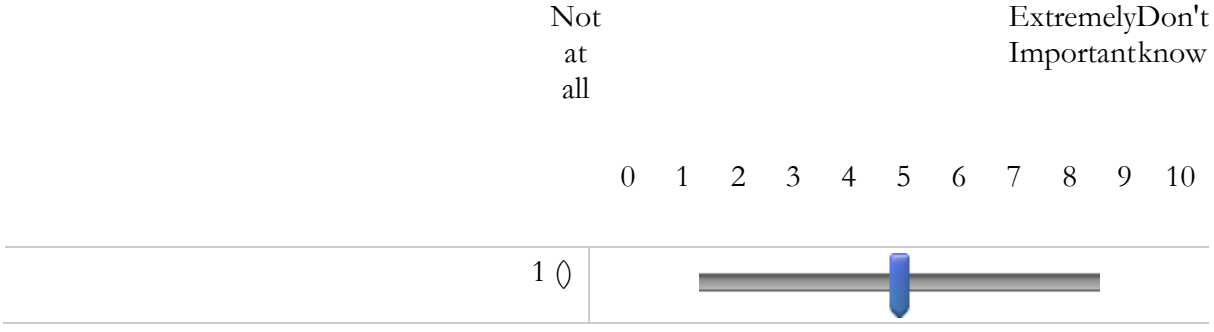


palestine_peace Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view? (Choose one)

- Israel should renew the peace process with the Palestinians (1)
- Israel should not renew the peace process with the Palestinians (4)

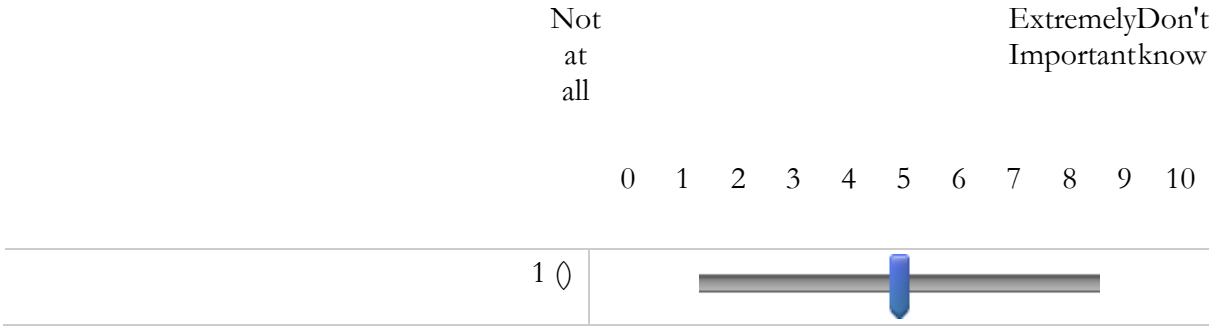
[Display This Question: If palestine_peace = 1]

palestine_peace_imp1 How important is it to you that Israel renew the peace process with the Palestinians? Rate your response on a scale where 0 means "not at all" and 10 means "extremely important".



[Display This Question: If palestine_peace = 4]

palestine_peace_imp2 How important is it to you that Israel does not renew the peace process with the Palestinians? Rate your response on a scale where 0 means "not at all" and 10 means "extremely important".



Q203 42. Some people talk about 'left', 'right' and 'centre' to describe their political views. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

- Left (1)
- Moderate left (2)
- Left-center (3)
- Center (4)
- Right-center (5)
- Moderate right (6)
- Right (7)
- Don't know (9)
- Prefer not to say (99)

Q205 44. For which party did you vote in the last legislative elections in November 2022?

- Likud (1)
- Yesh Atid (8)
- HaMahane HaMamlachti (4)
- Hatzionut Hadatit (Religious Zionist Party) (10)
- Shas (15)
- Yahadut Hatora (11)
- Yisrael Beiteinu (7)
- Ra'am (19)
- Hadash-Ta'al (20)
- HaAvoda (Labor) (5)
- Meretz (6)
- Balad (14)
- Jewish Home (9)
- Other (16)
- Did not vote (17)
- Don't know (18)

Q204 43. On a scale where 0 is rejection/hatred; 10 is support/sympathy; and 5 is in between, what is your attitude toward the following people:

	Rejection/hatred 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Support/sympathy	Don't know
Benjamin Netanyahu ()		
Yair Lapid ()		
Benny Gantz ()		

attn_check You probably have a favourite colour, but we are more interested in knowing whether you are doing the survey carefully, so please just select the colour blue.

- Blue (1)
- Orange (2)
- Red (3)
- Yellow (4)
- Purple (5)
- White (6)

Wave 2

oct7_trauma_2024 How traumatic were the attacks on October 7 for you personally?

	0 (1)	1 (35)	2 (36)	3 (37)	4 (38)	5 (39)	6 (41)	7 (42)	8 (43)	9 (45)	10 (49)	Don't know (51)
19 (19)												

lost_friend_fam_2024 Have you lost a close friend or family member in the October 7 attacks by Hamas or in the recent war in Gaza?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

fam_serve_2024 Have you or one of your family members served in the armed forces in the war in Gaza?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

C Additional Descriptives

Table C1: Mean affect toward different groups

	Wave 1			Wave 2		
Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	Mean	Std. Dev.
Right wingers	2233	6.835	2.613	2028	6.685	2.836
Left wingers	2233	4.355	2.998	2011	4.242	3.177
Palestinians	2233	2.374	2.465	2053	1.374	2.015
Arabs	2233	3.637	2.665	2037	2.604	2.516
Journalists	2233	4.778	2.739	1979	4.57	2.768
Jews	2233	8.527	1.911	2055	8.61	1.991
Reform supporter	2233	5.715	3.329	1969	5.121	3.46
Reform opponents	2233	5.009	3.382	1971	4.859	3.479
Gays/Lesbians	2233	6.108	2.981	2001	6.044	3.096
Ultra-Orthodox Jews	2233	5.317	3.208	2040	4.924	3.266
Secular Jews	2233	7.682	2.185	2030	7.618	2.25
Religious Jews	2233	6.563	2.722	2032	6.449	2.849
Leader	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	Mean	Std. Dev.
Netanyahu	2089	4.72	3.715	2066	4.136	3.833
Lapid	2087	3.853	3.284	2060	3.353	3.285
Gantz	2083	5.393	3.078	2057	4.765	3.215

Table C2: Mean affective polarization between rival societal groups

	Wave 1			Wave 2			Diff
Groups	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	
closest v. furthest party	1754	5.96	3.34	1613	6.72	3.26	0.76
Ideological in-/out- groups (left/right)	2086	3.69	3.90	1945	3.67	4.19	-0.02
Judicial reform in-/out- groups	2025	4.22	4.52	1854	3.96	4.79	-0.26
Religious in-/out- groups (secular/Ultra-Orthodox)	1442	3.62	3.47	1354	3.88	3.62	0.26
Religious in-/ out- groups (secular/religious)	1263	2.62	3.04	1177	2.69	3.24	0.06
Natanyahu v. Lapid (coalition/ opposition voters)	1901	5.24	3.96	1880	5.00	4.15	-0.25
Natanyahu v. Lapid (Likud/Yesh Atid voters)	958	6.09	3.62	911	5.78	3.99	-0.30

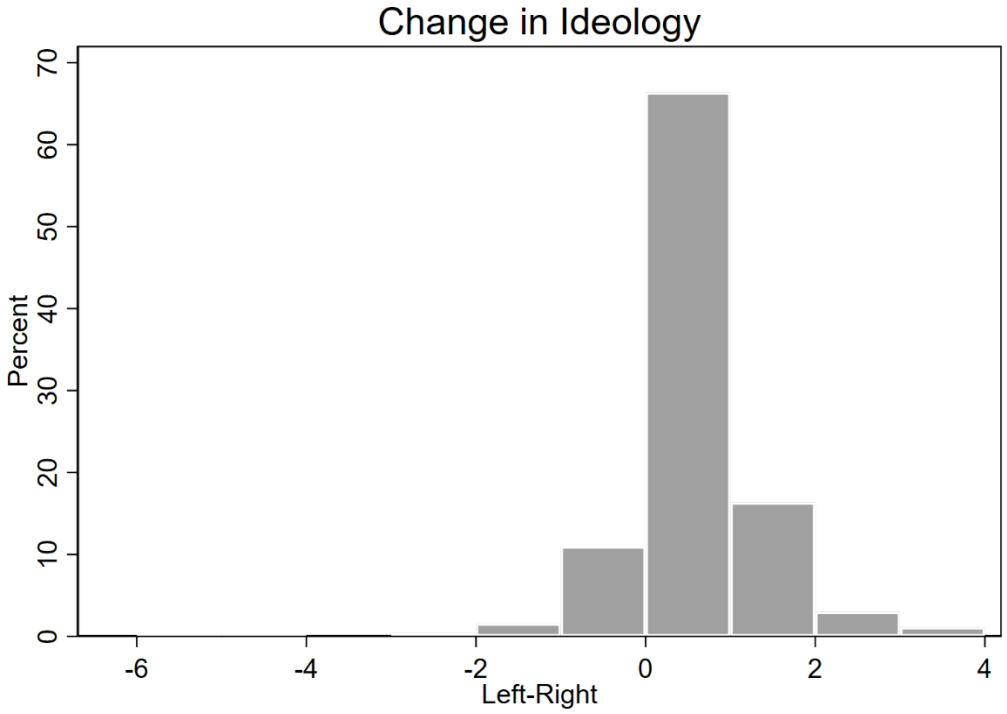


Figure C1: Change in ideological self-placement. N=2,031

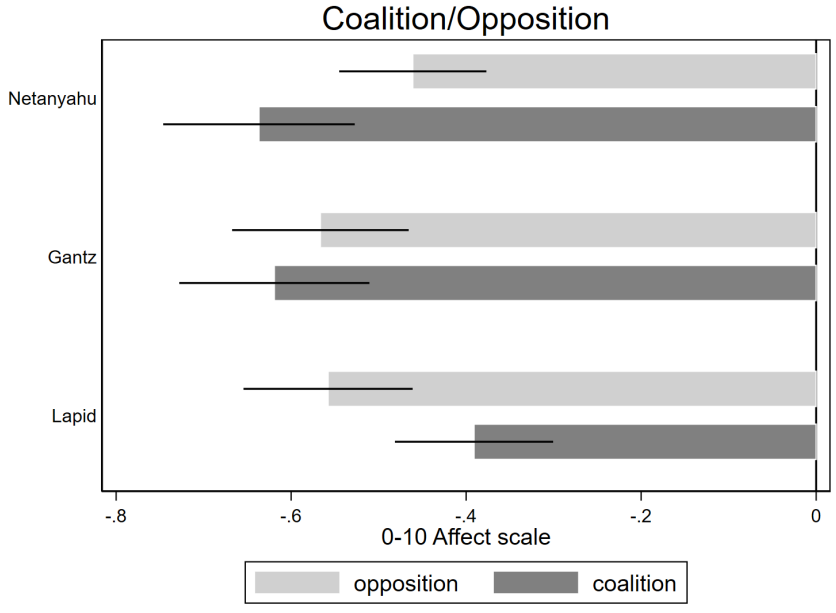


Figure C2: Change in affect toward party and camp leaders, by vote for coalition or opposition parties in 2022 election.

D Regression analysis

Table D1: Change in affect toward different societal in- and out-groups

	(1) Right wingers	(2) Left wingers	(3) Palestinians	(4) Arabs	(5) Journalists	(6) Jews	(7) Reform supporters	(8) Reform opponents	(9) Gay/ Lesbian	(10) Ultra-Orthodox Jews	(11) Secular Jews	(12) Religious Jews
Wave 2	-0.176***	-0.105	-0.970***	-1.018***	-0.199***	0.064	-0.637***	-0.142*	-0.134**	-0.393***	-0.086	-0.131**
	(0.048)	(0.055)	(0.047)	(0.050)	(0.055)	(0.048)	(0.071)	(0.065)	(0.051)	(0.049)	(0.050)	(0.050)
Constant	6.826***	4.364** *	2.382***	3.652***	4.780***	8.528***	5.735***	5.006***	6.130** *	5.308***	7.679** *	6.553***
	(0.057)	(0.065)	(0.053)	(0.058)	(0.059)	(0.041)	(0.072)	(0.073)	(0.064)	(0.069)	(0.047)	(0.059)
Observations	4,160	4,143	4,185	4,169	4,111	4,187	4,101	4,103	4,133	4,172	4,162	4,164
Number of uid	2,132	2,132	2,132	2,132	2,132	2,132	2,132	2,132	2,132	2,132	2,132	2,132

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table D2: Change in difference in affect gap toward pairs of rival social groups

	(1) Reform supporters v. opponents	(2) Right- v. Left-wingers	(3) Secular v. Ultra-Orthodox	(4) Secular v. religious	(5) Jews v. Arabs	(6) Netanyahu v. Lapid
Wave 2	-0.473***	0.004	0.327***	0.021	1.116***	-0.082
	(0.111)	(0.075)	(0.067)	(0.065)	(0.073)	(0.071)
Constant	0.729***	2.462***	2.371***	1.127***	4.876***	0.867***
	(0.131)	(0.102)	(0.086)	(0.074)	(0.076)	(0.140)
Observations	4,053	4,106	4,124	4,116	4,141	4,130
Adjusted R-squared	0.001	-0.000	0.001	-0.000	0.024	-0.000

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table D3: Change in affective polarization, taking group membership into account

	(1) Supporters of closest v. furthest party	(2) Ideological in-/out-groups (left/right)	(3) Judicial reform in-/out-groups	(4) Religious in-/out- groups (secular/Ultra-Orthodox)	(5) Religious in-/out- groups (secular/religious)	(6) Natanyahu v. Lapid (coalition/opposition voters)	(7) Natanyahu v. Lapid (Likud/Yesh Atid voters
Wave 2	0.758***	-0.023	-0.263*	0.262***	0.065	-0.247***	-0.304**
	(0.095)	(0.076)	(0.114)	(0.079)	(0.085)	(0.073)	(0.117)
Constant	5.964***	3.689***	4.221***	3.617***	2.622***	5.242***	6.088***
	(0.080)	(0.085)	(0.100)	(0.091)	(0.086)	(0.091)	(0.117)
Observations	3,367	4,031	3,879	2,796	2,440	3,781	1,869
Adjusted R-squared	0.013	-0.000	0.001	0.001	-0.000	0.001	0.001

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Interaction models

Table D4: Interaction models for AP dependent variables with exposure moderators

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	DV: AP by Party				**DV: AP by Ideology**				**DV: AP by Reform Support**			
Wave 2	0.493**	0.543***	0.628***	0.608***	-0.009	-0.048	-0.127	-0.206	-0.345	-0.257	-0.408**	-0.499**
	(0.167)	(0.121)	(0.110)	(0.146)	(0.112)	(0.085)	(0.080)	(0.114)	(0.186)	(0.133)	(0.124)	(0.171)
Trauma > Median	0.099				0.257				0.090			
	(0.186)				(0.186)				(0.219)			
Wave 2 # Trauma > Median	0.294				-0.174				-0.128			
	(0.211)				(0.149)				(0.235)			
Highest trauma		0.234				0.920***				0.405		
		(0.202)				(0.198)				(0.237)		
Wave 2 # Highest trauma		0.543*				-0.225				-0.473		
		(0.227)				(0.174)				(0.253)		
Personal loss			-0.265				0.132				0.002	
			(0.268)				(0.271)				(0.294)	
Wave 2 # Personal loss			0.524				0.069				-0.072	
			(0.292)				(0.221)				(0.305)	
Military service				-0.221				-0.168				-0.254
				(0.181)				(0.179)				(0.211)
Wave 2 # Military Service				0.171				0.162				0.148
				(0.204)				(0.151)				(0.229)
Constant	5.826***	5.817***	5.924***	6.007***	3.622***	3.515***	3.766***	3.877***	4.328***	4.268***	4.394***	4.533***
	(0.149)	(0.106)	(0.096)	(0.137)	(0.150)	(0.104)	(0.095)	(0.132)	(0.176)	(0.123)	(0.114)	(0.155)
Observations	3,090	3,054	3,072	3,072	3,890	3,830	3,862	3,862	3,708	3,660	3,678	3,678
Adjusted R-squared	0.010	0.015	0.010	0.009	-0.000	0.008	-0.000	-0.000	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.002

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table D4: Interaction models for AP dependent variables with exposure moderators (continued)

	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)
	DV: AP by Religiosity (Secular v. Ultra-Orthodox)				**DV: AP by Religiosity (Secular v. Religious)**				**DV: AP by Leaders (Netanyahu v. Lapid)**			
Wave 2	0.357**	0.147	0.154	0.048	0.251	0.068	0.009	-0.082	-0.168	-0.172*	-0.215**	-0.354***
	(0.124)	(0.090)	(0.084)	(0.123)	(0.135)	(0.097)	(0.092)	(0.130)	(0.124)	(0.081)	(0.078)	(0.102)
Trauma > Median	0.312				0.359*				0.361			
	(0.195)				(0.183)				(0.188)			
Wave 2 # Trauma > Median	-0.301				-0.383*				-0.073			
	(0.160)				(0.174)				(0.152)			
Highest trauma		0.232				0.372				0.351		
		(0.213)				(0.207)				(0.212)		
Wave 2 # Highest trauma		0.012				-0.250				-0.115		
		(0.184)				(0.203)				(0.166)		
Personal loss			-0.715**				-0.338				-0.277	
			(0.267)				(0.251)				(0.283)	
Wave 2 # Personal loss			0.040				-0.049				-0.001	
			(0.233)				(0.251)				(0.201)	
Military service				-0.871***				-0.787***				-0.639***
				(0.189)				(0.180)				(0.183)
Wave 2 # Military Service				0.205				0.150				0.250
				(0.159)				(0.173)				(0.143)
Constant	3.515***	3.667***	3.810***	4.190***	2.452***	2.597***	2.725***	3.123***	5.025***	5.145***	5.299***	5.613***
	(0.154)	(0.112)	(0.102)	(0.139)	(0.143)	(0.104)	(0.097)	(0.139)	(0.145)	(0.106)	(0.098)	(0.130)
Observations	2,708	2,666	2,692	2,692	2,354	2,320	2,340	2,340	3,704	3,680	3,704	3,704
Adjusted R-squared	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.011	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.011	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.004

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05