

How Does Nonviolent Protest Affect “The Other”?

Palestinian Protests and Israeli Perceptions

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Nonviolent Palestinian Resistance

- Long history of nonviolent struggle
 - pre-Balfour, through the first and second intifadas





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- After the Second Intifada
 - Old women encircle targeted buildings
 - hunger strike
 - Nakba remembrance



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 - Nakba remembrance
- Our Focus: Protests Against the Wall
 - Budrus, Bi'ilin, Others





Protest in Bi'ilin, 2011, dressed as the Na'vi from Avatar.

Photo by Bil'in village website: <http://www.bilin-village.org/>



The women of Budrus.

How Nonviolent Resistance Could Work

Show Israelis they have “partners for peace”...not all Palestinians support violent tactics.

Lead to more optimism about prospects for peace.

Decrease vigilance surrounding *sacred values*.

Lead to more optimistic assessments of what Palestinians think and how they would react to political moves.

How Nonviolent Resistance Could Work

Show Israelis they have “partners for peace”...not all Palestinians support violent tactics.

GROUPS

Lead to more optimism about prospects for peace.

TRADEOFFS

Decrease vigilance surrounding *sacred values*.

SACRED VALUES

Lead to more optimistic assessments of what Palestinians think and how they would react to political moves.

THEORY OF MIND

Survey Questions

GROUPS

- “Groups that are characterized by extreme and violent behavior will never change because the characteristics are deeply rooted within them.”

GROUPS

- “Do you think there are Palestinians who think Israelis should be killed just because they are Jews? If yes, what percentage do you think has this belief?”

TRADE-OFFS

- “Suppose the U.S. organized a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians...Would you vote for this agreement?”

Survey Questions, Cont.

TRADE-OFFS

- “Suppose the U.S. organized a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians...Do you think this agreement could be successfully and peacefully implemented, leading to a real peace?”

SACRED VALUES

- Do you agree that there are some circumstances where it would be permissible for Israelis to consider giving away part of Eretz Israel?

THEORY OF MIND

- Imagine Israel unilaterally declared and implemented a freeze on settlement building and dismantled illegal settlement outposts: Do you think Palestinians would see that Israel was serious about taking steps towards peace, and would end their support for the violent factions that hurt their cause, such as Hamas?

The Primes

- Two short “news” pieces about living costs and traffic accidents in Israel are read. Respondents asked “how important is this issue to you?”
- Then, an article about nonviolent protest, violent protest, or no third article.
- The nonviolent and violent protest articles are written to match protests that have actually occurred, matched for levels of sacrifice.
- All articles ~ word count.

Ex – Nonviolent Protest

“As you may know, some Palestinians in the WB have been peacefully protesting against the positioning of the security fence, which has taken away the lands and fields of many Palestinian villages...Every week, and sometimes everyday, these Palestinians walk to the site of the fence and try to reach their lost lands. Some tie themselves to bulldozers...One of their leaders says, “We have chosen another way...to protest nonviolently to carry a message of hope and real partnership between Palestinians and Israelis in the face of oppression and justice...”

Ex – Violent Protest

As you may know, some Palestinians in the WB have been violently protesting against the positioning of the security fence...every week, and sometimes every day, these militants plan and carry out acts of violence to confront the army, halt construction on the fence, and try to free the lost lands...One of their leaders says, “If land is occupied, Muslims have a right and a duty to resist that occupation...a military occupation is rightly resisted militarily...”

Survey, 26-27 July 2012

“NEWS”
PRIME

|

GROUP
BELIEFS

—

TRADE-
OFFS

—

SACRED
VALUES

—

DEMO-
GRAPHICS

Political Context at Time of Survey

Palestinian related – reminders of violence and cont. conflict

- March 2012 – Gaza-Israel clashes: after a militant assassination, Palestinians in Gaza send rockets to southern Israel for three days.
- March 15 – Palestinian from WB stabs a 19 year old Israeli girl on the Jerusalem Light Rail.
- June 1 – Israeli soldier killed by militant trying to infiltrate from Gaza
- June 6-7: plans to build 850 new settler homes announced by Israel.
- June : Israel hands over the bodies of 91 Palestinian suicide bombers and other militants as part of a goodwill gesture to Abbas to help revive the peace talks.

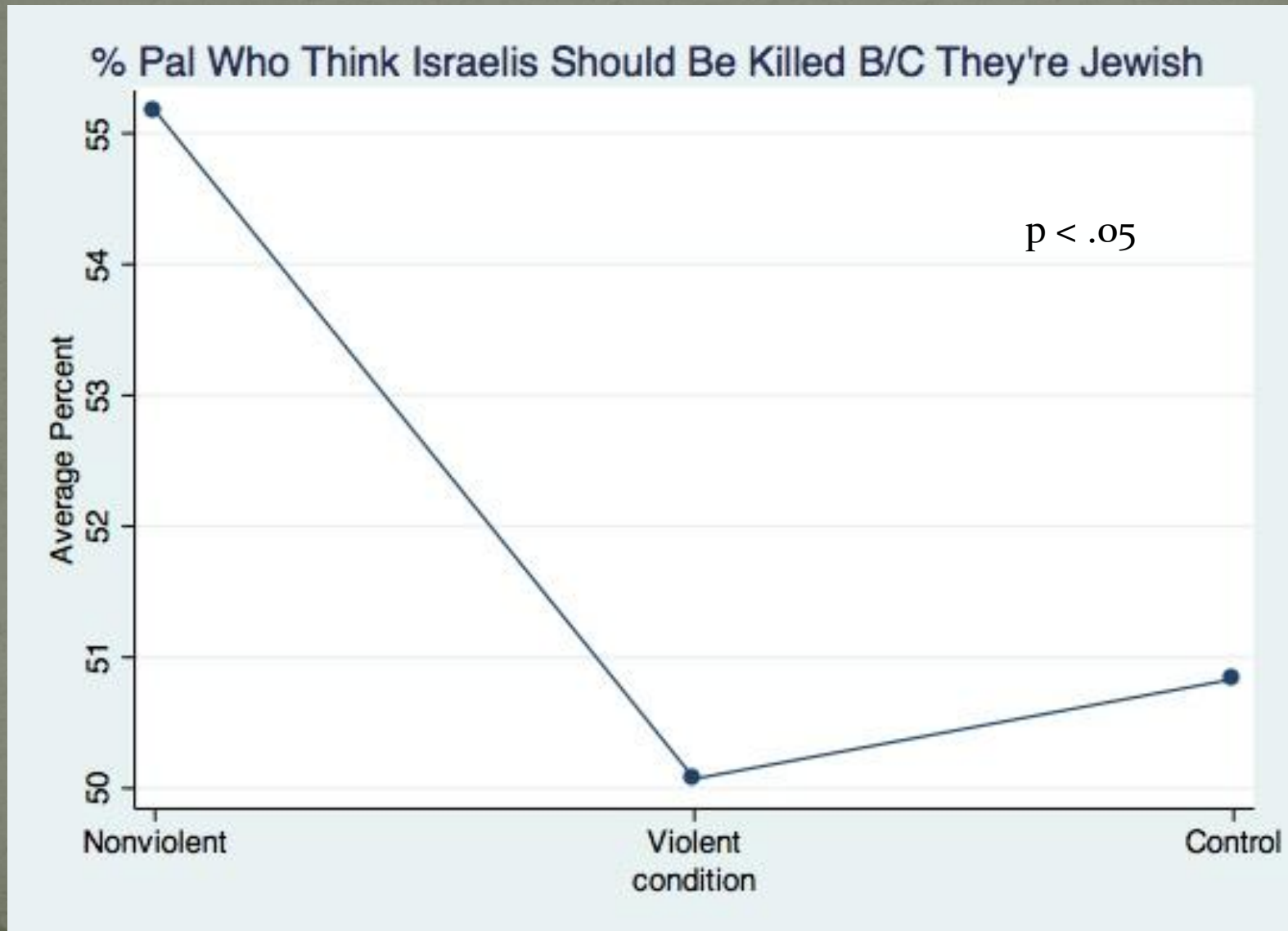
External environment - same

- April 5 - Rocket from Egypt's Sinai desert hits Eilat (no injuries/damage)
- June 18 – Israeli construction worker killed by militants at the Egypt-Israel border.
- Iran

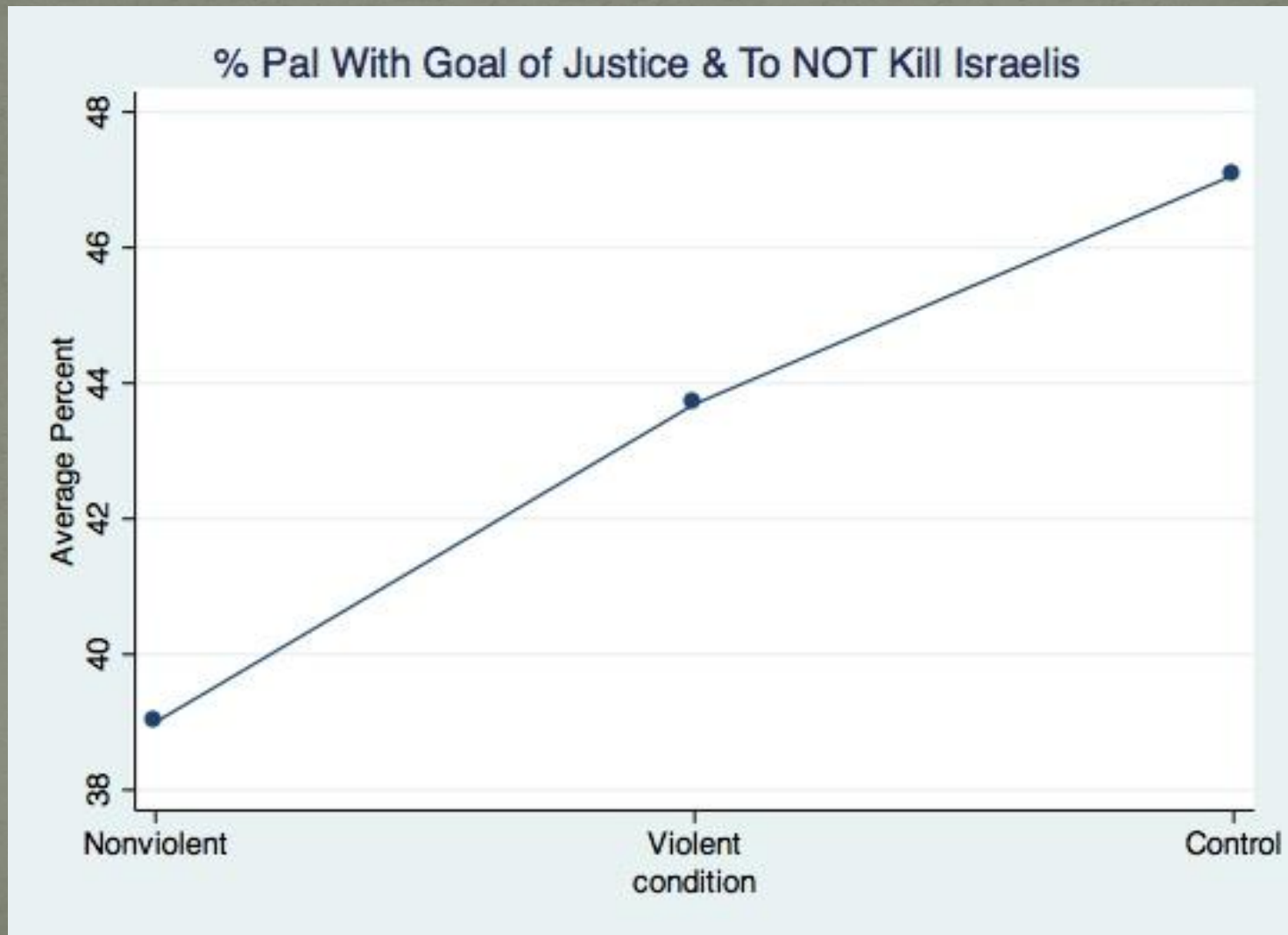
Overview

- In terms of negative effect, we predicted that Violent > Control > Nonviolent, or Violent > Nonviolent
- Instead, the nonviolent prime *never* led to a positive effect, in terms of statistical significance or even trends toward it.
- Often, the nonviolent prime led to small but significant *negative* effects, more so than both control and violent primes.

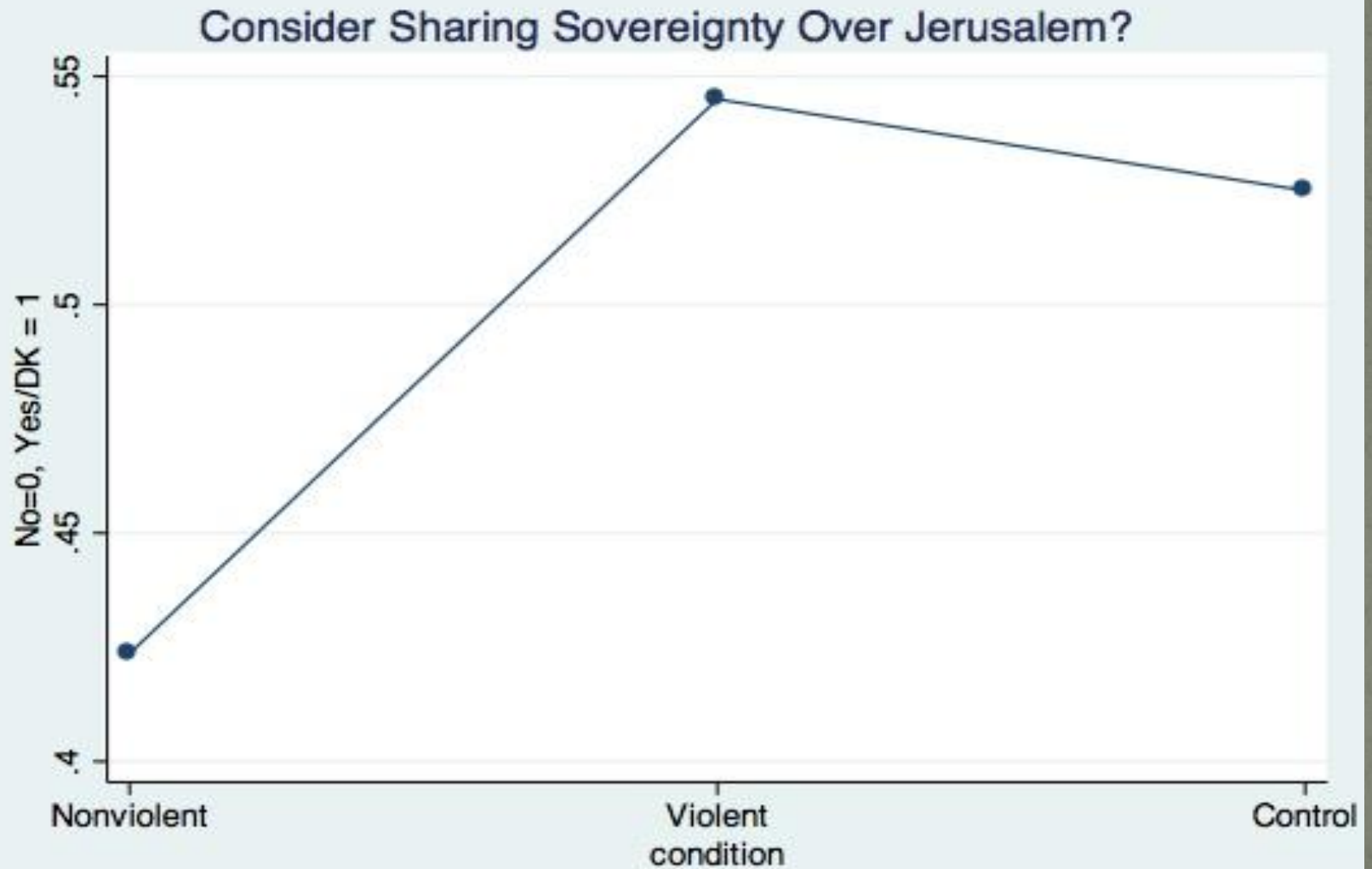
Groups



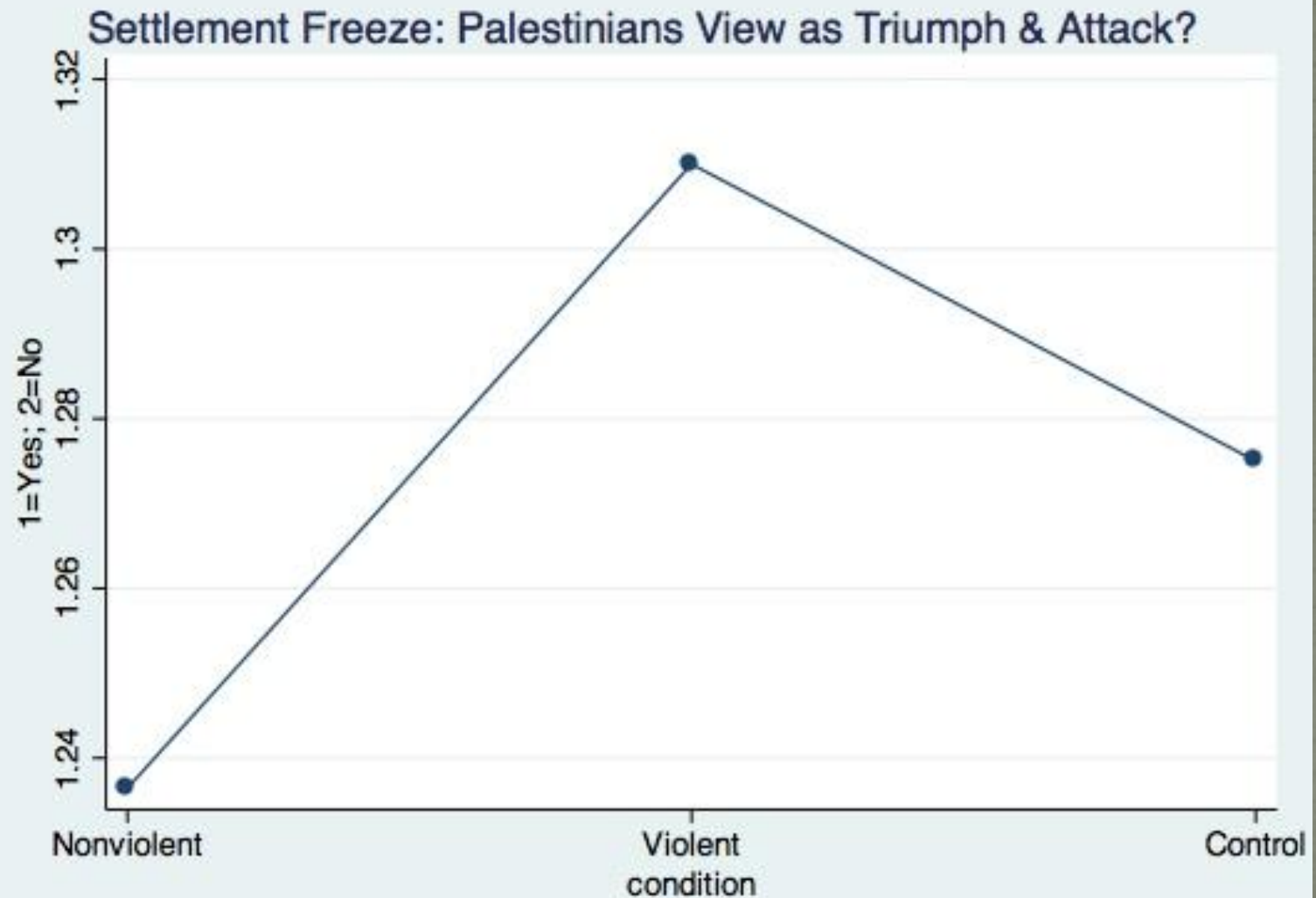
Groups



Sacred Values



Theory of Mind



Summary of Findings

- Nonviolent protest reminders led to small but statistically significant negative effects.
- Sometimes violence led to the least negative impact.
 - Perhaps whenever confronted with a Violent or Nonviolent representation, respondents pull up opposite stories. That would explain why the “control” condition was in the middle (it didn’t activate Palestinians at all).
 - It may also be the scenario that is most familiar. The novelty of NV protest – and the agency and unity it implies -- could be a threat.

Interpretations

- Psychological dampening – cognitive dissonance
 - Nonviolent protest takes away the moral high ground
 - Social identity theory: you need to feel good about your group. Distancing of the “other”
 - No clear political way forward. Frustration & distancing.
- Disbelief of the NV story
 - Parallel stories of violence create an assumption of violence.
 - Lack of news coverage.
 - Behaviors, if not attitudes, change via norms.
 - Empathy: perspective taking not possible w/o coverage.

Take-Aways

Nonviolent protest does not automatically equal “good” in the eyes of its target.

- In conflicts where violence has a history, or where it operates in parallel with nonviolent protest, there may be a cognitive lag before the other side changes perception of the group.

Problems with generalizing

- Co-occurring (and history of) Palestinian use of violence as a tactic in the conflict.
- Intergroup dynamics may be quite different than intra-group dynamics (e.g. initial Arab Spring)

Thank you!
We welcome your thoughts.