

# **An Elusive Gender Gap:**

Uncovering Gender Differences in  
Israeli and Palestinian Public Opinion

**An Honors Thesis for the Department of International Relations**

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## **Abstract**

Over the past few decades, a growing body of public opinion research conducted in the United States and internationally has found that women are less supportive of the use of force and more likely to favor peaceful means of conflict resolution than men. Interestingly, the few studies that have explicitly explored gender differences in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been at odds with this conventional wisdom. Most investigations of public opinion in Israel and Palestine have found little to no variation between male and female attitudes.

I hypothesize that this discrepancy may arise because such studies of gender differences in Israel and Palestine have often neglected to analyze survey questions that ask respondents about theoretically gendered topics. I additionally posit that the heightened security threats faced by Israelis and Palestinians in their everyday lives may temper the gender gaps observed in other international contexts. Using a wide variety of survey data from 1988 to present, I test these hypotheses by analyzing gender differences in Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards threat perception, the peace process, violence, and defense spending.

The gender gaps that emerge in my findings are at odds with the conclusions drawn in past studies and demonstrate the important role that the gendered nature of threat perception plays in shaping Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards the use of force. These findings have important theoretical implications for the study of gender and politics as well as key ramifications for the future of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Gender and Israeli-Palestinian Public Opinion:**

#### **A Call for Further Investigation**

Despite brief glimpses of hope for peace, over the past sixty years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has remained stubbornly intractable. From security concerns to disputes over territory, hard-line leaders on both sides have been reluctant to make concessions. This has caused the conflict to persist as a seemingly zero-sum game in which effective compromise remains an elusive goal. In recent decades however, a series of peace activism movements have emerged that demonstrate the strong desire of many Israelis and Palestinians to find a just and non-violent resolution to the conflict. Notably, Israeli and Palestinian women have joined these movements in large numbers and have distinguished themselves as prominent peace activists.

The rise of the First Palestinian Intifada marked the advent of women's peace activism in Israel as thousands of women flocked to the peace camp.<sup>1</sup> The all female organizations established in this period embraced more radically conciliatory positions than mainstream Israeli peace activists. In addition to organizing against the Israeli government, many of these women's groups began to engage in dialogue with Palestinian women. These activists participated in a range of pro-peace efforts from aiding Palestinian women imprisoned during the First Intifada, to improving coordination between Israeli and Palestinian female peace organizations.<sup>2</sup>

The increased political activism of Palestinian women catalyzed by the First Intifada, combined with the emergence of a distinct women's peace movement in Israel, prompted the rise

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<sup>1</sup> Svirsky, Gila. "The Women's Peace Movement in Israel" In *Jewish Feminism in Israel –Some Contemporary Perspectives*, Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003, 115.

<sup>2</sup> Deutsch-Nadir, Sharon. 2005. "Capitalizing on Women's Traditional Roles in Israeli Peace Activism." Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis. Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

of peace activism among Palestinian women.<sup>3</sup> Female Israeli activists were impressed by the frontline participation of Palestinian women in the First Intifada and became increasingly interested in collaborating and creating dialogue.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, Palestinian women hoped that Israeli feminists would hear their grievances and work to transform Israeli society from within. Since the rise of these Israeli and Palestinian female peace movements, women on both sides have organized dialogue groups, peace conferences, collaborative projects and solidarity initiatives.<sup>5</sup> These fledgling alliances between Israeli and Palestinian women are often fragile. Nonetheless, the desire of female activists to engage with one another and their commitment to peacefully resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is noteworthy in the midst of such a protracted struggle.

Seeming to provide a theoretical explanation for women's peace activism in Israel and Palestine, a growing body of research has found that women are more "peaceful" than men. International public opinion research has consistently demonstrated that women are less supportive of the use of military force, more likely to support peaceful solutions over violent ones, and more inclined to adopt collaborative approaches to conflict resolution. Applied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this "women and peace" hypothesis appears to imply that female peace activism results from the innately peaceful worldviews shared by women on both sides. Despite this, the few studies that have been devoted to gender and public opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian context have found little to no difference in the attitudes of Israeli and Palestinian men and women. This discrepancy warrants further investigation, as it has important

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<sup>3</sup> Sharoni, Simona. 1995. *Gender and the Israeli Palestinian Conflict*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press. 131.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* 135.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* 136- 145.

ramifications given the potent role of public opinion in shaping policy decisions on both sides of the conflict.<sup>6</sup>

Seeking to address this inconsistency in the gender and public opinion literature and to gain a better understanding of the role of gender in shaping Israeli and Palestinian attitudes, in this thesis I investigate the following research questions:

- 1) Do Israeli and Palestinian men and women differ in their attitudes towards threat perception, security, and evaluations of “enemy” aspirations?
- 2) In line with the “women and peace” hypothesis, are Israeli and Palestinian women more likely to support peaceful means of conflict resolution than men?
- 3) Are women less supportive of the use of force than men when they are aware of its violent consequences including civilian deaths?
- 4) Do male and female Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards defense and social spending differ from one another?

Chapter 2 provides a literature review of gender differences in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion and other international contexts, demonstrating the need for further inquiry and a revised research agenda. Drawing on the theories put forth in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 elucidates the important relationship between gender and threat perception in Israel and Palestine. Bearing in mind the salience of threat perception in shaping attitudes towards the peace process and the use of force, Chapter 4 tests the women and peace hypothesis in the Israeli-Palestinian context, and Chapter 5 explores gender differences in support for the violent use of force. Building on the theoretically gendered nature of public spending outlined in Chapter 2, Chapter 6 examines the relationship between gender and support for social and defense spending among Israelis and Palestinians.

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<sup>6</sup> Shamir, Jacob, and Khalil Shiqaqi *Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion: the Public Imperative in the Second Intifada*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2010.



Chapters 3 through 6 provide analysis of survey data from a wide variety of sources including: The Israeli Election Study, The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), the Palestinian Center for Survey Research incorporating the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC), Birzeit University Center for Development Studies, and the Program on International Policy Attitudes. Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes the conclusions presented in chapters 3 through 6, demonstrates the theoretical contribution of this study to the literature on gender and public opinion, and discusses the implications of this analysis for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Missing Gender Gap:**

#### **A Literature Review and Revised Research Agenda**

Since the late 1970's, a growing body of public opinion evidence conducted in the US and internationally has found that relative to men, women are less supportive of the use of force and violence as a means of conflict resolution. This research has emerged alongside the “women and peace” hypothesis that has been addressed in interdisciplinary studies conducted by a diverse set of scholars from biologists and anthropologists to psychologists and proponents of feminist theory. These studies seek to explain the disproportionate female aversion to violence and support of diplomatic solutions. However, as outlined in Chapter 1, the few studies that have explicitly explored gender and public opinion in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been at odds with this general research consensus. Most examinations of gender differences in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion have found little to no variation between men and women in attitudes towards the use of force or the peace process. There are numerous theories put forth to explain this discrepancy, ranging from the high salience of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the lives of Israeli and Palestinian men and women to the unique sociopolitical roles of women in the Middle East.

This inconsistency in research findings deserves more attention, as it seems paradoxical that gender differences in public opinion that are found in diverse geopolitical, socioeconomic, and cultural environments would simply not be present in the Israeli-Palestinian context. In this chapter I evaluate the existing literature on the “women and peace hypothesis,” gender differences in support for war, and the limited studies on gender and public opinion in the

Middle East. I then contextualize my own research and demonstrate the need for a revised approach to the study of gender and public opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **The Women and Peace Hypothesis**

In recent years, a significant interdisciplinary body of research has been devoted to investigating the “women and peace hypothesis.” Proponents of this argument posit that women are more diplomatic than men in their approach to conflict resolution and less likely to support violence or the use of force. This hypothesis has been explored by a wide range of experts on gender from psychologists and biologists to anthropologists, sociologists, and scholars of feminist theory. Summarizing some of the findings in this research, Yaacov Boaz Yablon writes that women tend to prefer harmonious social relations and are more empathic than men. He argues that this makes them better able to negotiate and more inclined to diplomatically discuss contentious issues. Furthermore, because women historically and currently have had disproportionately less social, political, and military power than men, they prefer peaceful means of conflict resolution due to what Yablon terms their lack of “power as a social resource.”<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, because women have not traditionally participated on the front lines of military action across cultures, they have historically taken more passive roles in conflict resolution that have socialized them to act as relative peacemakers. Yablon cites the arguments of Elshtain and Dietz, who assert that as mothers and natural caregivers, women have a unique capacity to “eliminate violence in nonviolent ways.”<sup>2</sup> That being said, this mothering hypothesis has not been particularly successful in explaining gendered attitudes towards conflict, as

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<sup>1</sup> Yablon, Yaacov Boaz. (2009). Gender Differences in the Consistency of Attitudes Towards Peace. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 32(4), 305-310.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Conover and Sapiro concluded.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in their study of parental attitudes on national security issues in the U.S. “War on Terror,” Elder and Green also disputed this mothering hypothesis. They found that while mothers have different views than women without children on certain social welfare issues, they do not have unique attitudes on national security and defense. Interestingly, they discovered that fathers cannot be considered a unique voting bloc in American politics as they have no statistically significantly different attitudes on any social, economic, or military issues relative to men without children.<sup>4</sup>

Expanding on the research examined by Yablon, Joshua Goldstein argues that gender roles in war are very consistent across all human societies. He observes that when faced with war, “in every known case, past and present, cultures have met [the] challenge in a gender-based way, by assembling groups of fighters who were primarily, and usually exclusively, male.”<sup>5</sup> Goldstein examines the manner in which constructions of masculinity motivate soldiers to fight, regardless of cultural differences and diverse belief systems. He argues that “norms of masculinity contribute to men’s exclusive status as warriors, and preparation for war is frequently a central component of masculinity.” He then presents a framework in which war becomes what he calls a “test of manhood”—socializing males into participation in violent combat. Thus in wartime, the military role of men shapes women’s subservient positions as mothers, wives, and sweethearts of brave soldiers. Goldstein also proposes that despite their support role in war, many women actively oppose male dominated violent conflict, resulting in what he terms the “feminization of peace.”<sup>6</sup> Goldstein therefore argues that the gendering of war

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<sup>3</sup> Johnston, Pamela, Conover, and Sapiro, V. (1993). Gender, feminist consciousness, and war. *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(4), pp. 1079-1099.

<sup>4</sup> Elder, L. and Greene, S. (2007), “The Myth of ‘Security Moms’ and ‘NASCAR Dads’: Parenthood, Political Stereotypes, and the 2004 Election.” *Social Science Quarterly*, 88: 1–19.

<sup>5</sup> Goldstein, Joshua S. 2001. *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

stems from both innate biological gender differences as well as from “cultural modeling” or the socialization of men into violent and valiant warriors.

In addition to biological and cultural factors, it is important to understand the strands of feminist theory that seek to explain the gendered nature of war. Goldstein provides a useful summary of the complex and occasionally conflicting feminist theories that deal with war. He quotes political theorist Jean Elshtain, who has described feminist theory on war as a “polyphonic chorus of female voices...” and argues that “feminists are not only at war with war but with one another.”<sup>7</sup> Though most feminist theorists agree that gender is an important factor in understanding war and many see women as a “disadvantaged class, unjustly dominated and exploited by men,” Goldstein reviews these gendered roles using of three different schools of feminist thought.<sup>8</sup>

The first of these is Liberal Feminism, which posits that men have disproportionate power over women due to socially constructed, sexist discrimination. Liberal feminists point to examples of strong Amazon-like female warriors as evidence that women can be skilled fighters. They argue that women have been denied the opportunity to participate actively in combat because of male oppression. Believing that women are in every way equal to men and therefore equally inclined to violence, liberal feminists posit that the inclusion of women in war would not substantively alter the international system, impact country’s foreign policy, or the practice of combat itself.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike proponents of Liberal Feminism, Difference Feminists believe that women and men do have fundamentally different life experiences due to biological and cultural differences. They argue that women are more nurturing and more skilled at interpersonal relationships and

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

negotiations. Thus they propose that women are better at conflict resolution and group decision making than men, who generally excel in violent combat. Finally, Postmodern Feminists see gender roles as arbitrary social constructions and thus believe that any gender differences that appear in war are conditioned by cultural, economic, and other contextual factors.<sup>10</sup>

A final important aspect of the “women and peace hypothesis” pertains to the social and geopolitical factors that cause women to be disproportionately vulnerable in wartime and thus more likely to avoid or oppose violent conflict. As Sharon Deutsch-Nadir describes in her 2005 dissertation, all four Geneva Conventions recognize women as populations at risk and in need of special protection.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, women constitute the majority of refugees worldwide and in wartime are often victims of violence and sexual abuse. Modern intrastate wars that have wracked the globe since the fall of the Soviet Union have directly targeted civilians in a manner that has led to a shift in the traditional roles of women. For example, Deutsch-Nadir cites women in Sri-Lanka, India-Pakistan, the Philippines, Argentina and the Sudan who have worked to actively bridge over ethnic, religious, political and social gaps, showing their opposition to war and support for peace.<sup>12</sup> As former Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan stated in October 2000,

“... Women, who know the price of conflict so well, are also often better equipped than men to prevent or resolve it. For generations, women have served as peace educators, both in their families and their societies. They have proved instrumental in building bridges rather than walls.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Deutsch-Nadir, Sharon. 2005. “Capitalizing on Women’s Traditional Roles in Israeli Peace Activism.”

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

More recently, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton argued, "...We cannot exclude the talents of half the population...when it comes to matters of life and death....we... [cannot]... afford to ignore, marginalize and dismiss the very direct contributions that women can and have made."<sup>14</sup> Thus the unique hardships that women face in times of armed conflict have prompted many to take a more active role in global struggles for peace.

### **Gender Public Opinion and War**

Beginning in the late 1970s, public opinion researchers have focused on gender differences in policy preferences on salient issues in American politics— most notably the gap between male and female attitudes on the use of force and violence. Shapiro and Mahajan found that average gender differences in the support for the use of force and violence have consistently been moderately large and “merit more attention than they have been given in the past.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Tessler reviews a series of polls conducted in the 1980’s that found statistically significant differences between American male and female opinions regarding military aid, the use of U.S. troops, and the containment of communism.<sup>16</sup> In these polls men overwhelmingly demonstrated more hawkish attitudes than women.

In their landmark study based on data from the 1991 American National Election Pilot Study, Conover and Sapiro report that while women can hardly be classified as uniformly pacifist, relative to men they are generally more fearful of the prospects of war and wary of foreign involvements. Most importantly, they found that women are especially cautious when asked about imminent rather than hypothetical wars. Although women are willing to contemplate

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<sup>14</sup> Clinton, Hillary. United Nations News Feed. October 2010.  
<http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/unifeed/d/16258.html>

<sup>15</sup> Shapiro, R. Y., & Mahajan, H. (1986). Gender differences in policy preferences: A summary of trends from the 1960s to the 1980s. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 50(1), pp. 42-61.

<sup>16</sup> Tessler, M., & Warriner, I. (1997). Gender, feminism, and attitudes toward international conflict: Exploring relationships with survey data from the Middle East. *World Politics*, 49(2), pp. 250-281.

the use of military force when given appropriate justifications, Conover and Sapiro conclude that socially constructed and contextually driven gender differences foster more dovish female attitudes.<sup>17</sup> Eichenberg largely confirms this and adds in his 2003 research that gender differences in public opinion are heightened when the risk and the human cost of military actions are made known, particularly when casualties are mentioned in survey questions.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, Crowder-Meyer concludes in her 2007 study that while American women are generally wary of U.S. involvement in wars and less supportive of military spending, they are more likely than men to support humanitarian interventions or operations that promote stability and are more willing to spend tax dollars doing so.<sup>19</sup>

Outside the U.S., a smaller but nonetheless significant body of literature has focused on cross-national studies of gender differences in public opinion, including attitudes toward conflict and the use of force. Taking a general look at gender gaps in cross national voting behavior, and drawing on data from the World Values Surveys conducted in the 1980's and 1990's, Norris and Ingleheart conclude that gender differences in electoral behavior have been realigning. They argue that women have moved to the left of men throughout advanced industrial societies but that the same pattern has not been observed in developing countries. They test a variety of structural and cultural hypotheses to explain this manifestation of the gender gap and find that women in advanced industrialized societies have shifted left because of a "broad process of value changes, particularly the shift towards more egalitarian attitudes associated with postmaterialism

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<sup>17</sup> Pamela Johnston Conover, & Sapiro, V. (1993). Gender, feminist consciousness, and war. *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(4), pp. 1079-1099.

<sup>18</sup> Eichenberg, R. C. (2003). Gender differences in public attitudes toward the use of force by the united states, 1990-2003. *International Security*, 28(1), pp. 110-141.

<sup>19</sup> Crowder-Meyer, (2007). "Gender Differences in Policy Preferences and Priorities." Midwest Political Science Association April 2007.



and feminism.”<sup>20</sup> Norris and Inglehart find more mixed evidence of a gender gap in post-communist and developing nations. They write that this “reinforces the finding that any global analysis of the gender gap needs to take account of the type of society, as well as individual level factors.”<sup>21</sup> Inglehart and Norris also trace the uneven advance of gender equality worldwide and offer explanations for these discrepancies through an analysis of modernization, religion, voting and cultural change. This impact of secularization and modernization on the gender gap may be particularly relevant in the Israeli and Palestinian case in light of the polarization of religious attitudes in Israel and relatively widespread religious conservatism among Palestinians. Because religious conservatism is frequently more prevalent in developing countries, patriarchal social structures may discourage women from developing different attitudes than men. Thus it is important to recognize that particular cultural or national contexts influence gender equality and may also impact gender gaps in voting or public opinion.<sup>22</sup>

Using survey data from a variety of international cities in the lead up to the First Gulf War, Wilcox, Hewitt, and Allsop found that in all industrialized democracies studied, women were significantly less willing to support the use of force to stop Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait than men, though there was less of a gender gap in developing nations. They speculated that this might be due to an unwillingness of women to express opinions divergent from those of men, especially in Muslim countries.<sup>23</sup> While much of the cross-national data on gender and the use of force has centered on support for the Gulf War, in 2007 Eichenberg measured support for the use of military force in six historical internationalized conflicts drawing data from 37

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<sup>20</sup> Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2000). “The Developmental Theory of the Gender Gap: Women’s and Men’s Voting Behavior in Global Perspective.” *International Political Science Review* October 2000 21: 441-463

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Ronald Inglehart, and Pippa Norris. 2003. *Rising tide: Gender equality and cultural change around the world*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>23</sup> Wilcox, Clyde, Lara Hewitt, and Dee Allsop. 1996. The Gender Gap in Attitudes Toward the Gulf War: A Cross-National Perspective. *Journal of Peace Research* 33 (1) (Feb.): pp. 67-82.

countries. He found that although there are many commonalities in male and female attitudes, “the direction of gender differences is always and everywhere that women are less supportive of using military force than men.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Gender and Threat Perception**

In order to understand the gendered nature of support for the use of force in the Israeli Palestinian context, it is vital to recognize the role of threat perception. Issues of threat and security lie at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and like support for military force, gender gaps in threat perception have been noted in a variety of international contexts.<sup>25</sup> Perception of threat is linked to fear, which is one of the most basic and instinctual of human emotions. Various studies of the psychology of threat, such as Gray’s 1989 study, Ohman’s 1993 study, and Rachman’s 1978 study, have defined the emotion of fear as “a specific subjective aversive feeling that arises when one perceives a threat or danger to oneself and/or one’s society, and enables an adaptive response.”<sup>26</sup> Humans are able to detect and anticipate a diverse set of threats, ranging from personal dangers such as attack by a dog or darkness, to social threats like political persecution, terrorist attacks, or war.<sup>27</sup> A variety of studies from the fields of political psychology to biology have found that women are more likely to feel threatened or to fear victimization than men.<sup>28</sup> For example, Kevin Ferraro’s 1996 study demonstrates that women frequently overestimate the risks posed by specific crimes. Women are more likely to fear violent crimes than men, despite the fact that men are statistically more likely to be victims of

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<sup>24</sup> Eichenberg, Richard. “Gender Differences in Support for the Use of Military Force in Cross-National Perspective: The War System, Modernization, and the Universal Logics of Military Action.” *Midwest Political Science Association* 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Eichenberg, Richard. “When Gender (Sometimes) Trumps Party: Citizen Attitudes toward Torture in the War against Terror and the Use of Poison Gas in World War II,” *Midwest Political Science Association* 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Bar-Tal, “Collective Emotional Orientation of Fear in Societies Engulfed by Intractable Conflict.” *Political Psychology* Vol. 22, No. 3 (Sep., 2001), pp. 601-627

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Huddy, Leonie, Stanley Feldmen, Theresa Capelos, and Colin Provost. “The Consequences of Terrorism: Disentangling the Effects of Personal and National Threat.” *Political Psychology*, 23 (2002)

such crimes.<sup>29</sup> This gendered threat perception on the individual level is also thought to extend to the national level.<sup>30</sup>

In the field of biology, McClure and her colleagues find in their 2004 study of gender differences in brain engagement during the evaluation of threat that “Numerous studies report gender differences in perceiving, interpreting, and reacting to social cues that signify the potential presence of interpersonal threats.” In their own research they find evidence that gender differences exist in patterns of activation in neural structures connected to emotional stimuli and threat perception.<sup>31</sup> This is also logical from an evolutionary perspective when considering the traditional roles of women as mothers and caregivers who must defend their children and themselves from male attack or rape. Furthermore, women in many societies have been socialized into roles as the “weaker sex” that feed into their high levels of threat perception.

Another important aspect of threat perception is the evaluation of enemy motivations. Notably, although women are more fearful of imagined and real threats than men, they are more likely to see enemies in a more human and sympathetic light. Researchers in the fields of biology and psychology have found women to be more sympathetic and especially more empathetic than men. This has been tied to differences in testosterone levels, frontal lobe activity, and also to the evolutionary role of women as mothers and caregivers.<sup>32</sup> For example, in his study of the gender gap in support for the use of torture in the “War on Terror,” Eichenberg reviews a body of literature demonstrating the lower measure of female support for punitive actions.<sup>33</sup> In her study

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<sup>29</sup> Ferraro, Kenneth “Women's Fear of Victimization: Shadow of Sexual Assault?” *Social Forces*. Vol. 75, No. 2 (Dec., 1996), pp. 667-690

<sup>30</sup> Huddy et al. “The Consequences of Terrorism: Disentangling the Effects of Personal and National Threat.”

<sup>31</sup> McClure, Erin et al. “A developmental examination of gender differences in brain engagement during evaluation of threat” *Biological Psychiatry*, 55(2004): 1047-1055

<sup>32</sup> Rueckert, Linda and Nicollete Naybara. “Gender differences in empathy: The role of the right hemisphere” *Brain and Cognition* 67 (2008) 162–167

<sup>33</sup> Eichenberg, Richard. “When Gender (Sometimes) Trumps Party: Citizen Attitudes toward Torture in the War against Terror and the Use of Poison Gas in World War II.”

of women and peacemaking, Eileen Babbitt discusses female relational empathy or the “ability to step outside of oneself and one’s perspective and see the perspective of the other...focus[ing]... on the shared meaning created through the interpersonal encounter and on the process of learning how the other’s context has generated the other’s meaning.”<sup>34</sup> This has interesting and perhaps conflicting implications for the gendered nature of threat perception. It signifies that women are more likely to be fearful of enemy attack, yet they are also more likely to sympathize or empathize with their enemies.<sup>35</sup>

### **Gender and Support for Violent Actions**

As Eichenberg, Goldstein, and Deutsch-Nadir all indicated in their discussions of the gender gaps in support for the use of force and the women and peace hypothesis, women are especially sensitive to the human costs of war and more likely to oppose war when casualties or violence are explicitly mentioned. Furthermore, Conover and Sapiro note that women are far less supportive of war when survey questions mention civilian casualties or other “emotionally distressing” aspects of conflict. Not surprisingly, as Eichenberg writes, “There are many commonalities in the determinants of support among men and women [for the use of force], in particular the prominent impact of universal logics.”<sup>36</sup> As my review of gender and war literature indicates, even proponents of the woman and peace hypothesis agree that women will support the use of force given the proper justification. The gender gap is thus only visible at the margins and reflects the manner in which women across cultures have been socialized to avoid violence and to attempt peaceful means of resolving conflicts. As Eichenberg describes in his discussion of gendered support

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<sup>34</sup> Babbitt, Eileen and Tamara Pearson. “Women and the Art of Peacemaking: Data from Israeli-Palestinian Interactive Problem-Solving Workshops.” *Political Psychology*. 19 (1998) 185-209.

<sup>35</sup> For a more complete review of the literature on the inverse relationship between female relatively high levels threat perception and women’s relatively low support for punitive actions against enemies, see Eichenberg’s 2010 paper “When Gender (Sometimes) Trumps Party: Citizen Attitudes toward Torture in the War against Terror and the Use of Poison Gas in World War II.” *Midwest Political Science Association*, April 2010

<sup>36</sup> Eichenberg, Richard. “When Gender (Sometimes) Trumps Party: Citizen Attitudes toward Torture in the War against Terror and the Use of Poison Gas in World War II.”

for torture in the War on Terror, “there is little doubt that women are less likely [than men] to endorse the employment of violence for political or any other purpose.”<sup>37</sup> Greater gender gaps are therefore more likely to emerge when respondents are asked to evaluate explicitly violent policy options or military operations.

### **Gender and Defense Spending**

The gendered nature of support for defense spending is another key component of understanding the gender gap in support for the use of military force and the “women and peace” hypothesis. A substantial body of research has pointed to the fact that women are less supportive of defense spending than men. (Eichenberg 2003, Cook 1991, Kaufman 1999, Conover, 1988) For example, in Eichenberg’s 2003 study of the gender gap in defense spending using survey data from 1992 to 2000, he finds an average gender gap of nine percentage points for each year analyzed. These attitudes towards defense spending are unsurprising in light of the gender gap in support for the use of force, especially when respondents are made aware of the human costs of war.

These attitudes are also tied to the understanding that increased defense spending will detract from social spending. Because women disproportionately support social spending, their relatively negative attitudes towards defense spending are heightened. As Wirls writes in his 1986 study, “The conventional view of the gender gap emphasizes women’s more liberal policy positions. These positions are said to be the source of gaps across several policy areas, specifically the use of force (militarism, defense spending), compassion (governmental involvement in social welfare, health, and promoting equality), and risk (environmental protection, nuclear power).”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Wirls, Daniel. “Reinterpreting the Gender Gap.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 1986. S0: 316-30.

Additionally, a substantial body of literature has found that women are more supportive than men of spending on “compassion issues” or policies concerned with helping others—especially those who are poor, unemployed, or sick.<sup>39</sup> Shapiro and Mahajan outline a variety of explanations that have been put forth to address this phenomenon. One reason may be that women’s socialization into roles as nurturers and caretakers has sensitized them to aid those in need. From a different line of reasoning, they present evidence that perhaps a distinct female political consciousness has prompted women to extend their traditional roles to assuage broader social problems.<sup>40</sup> As Wirls argues, these compassion issues deal with jobs, income redistribution, spending on social welfare, and unemployment policies.<sup>41</sup> Thus public spending has been found to be highly gendered in a variety of international contexts, and warrants investigation in the Israeli-Palestinian context.<sup>42</sup>

### **Gender and Public Opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

Interestingly, despite the growing body of research that has found women to be less supportive of military force, the vast majority of the literature that examines these gender differences in the specific context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are at odds with the “women and peace” hypothesis. In their 1997 study, Mark Tessler and Ina Warriner use survey data from Israel, Palestine, Egypt, and Kuwait to investigate the relationships between gender, feminism, and attitudes toward war and peace. The Israeli data was from a 1989 national poll carried out by the Dahaf Agency that sampled persons over the age of eighteen residing in four hundred randomly selected urban Jewish households. The data included a number of questions pertaining

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<sup>39</sup> Cook 1979

<sup>40</sup> Shapiro and Mahajan “Gender Differences in Policy Preferences: A Summary of Trends from the 1960s to the 1980s “

<sup>41</sup> Wirls, Daniel. “Reinterpreting the Gender Gap.” 1986.

<sup>42</sup> For a more complete overview of the literature on the gender gap in support for defense spending, see Eichenberg’s paper “Gender Differences or Parallel Publics?” Richard C. Eichenberg and Richard J. Stoll, “Gender Difference or Parallel Publics? The Dynamics of Attitudes Towards Defense Spending in the United States,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, forthcoming 2011/2012.

to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including issues of security, attitudes toward the Palestinians and the possibility of territorial compromise in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian data on the other hand, was collected in 1994 by the Center for Palestine Research and Studies (CPRS) in Nablus as trained field-workers polled a random sample of 1,251 West Bank and Gaza residents. One polling question dealt with partisan preferences. It divided respondents according to whether or not they favored factions that support territorial compromise and mutual recognition. The second question inquired about support for or opposition to the conduct of armed operations against Israeli targets in Gaza and Jericho.

After analyzing their data, Tessler and Warriner find that women and men do not have significantly different views about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Israel, Palestine, Kuwait, and Egypt. They conclude that

“notwithstanding the contrary hypotheses advanced by some scholars, there is no evidence that women are less militaristic than men or more oriented toward diplomacy and compromise in their judgments about the most important international conflict in the region in which they reside.”

It is important to note, however, that in exploring attitudes towards gender equality, Tessler and Warriner find that those men and women who support gender equality also support a peaceful resolution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They argue that “Individuals who embrace this combination of attitudes would seem to have a generalized predisposition in favor of reconciliation, extending their concern for justice and equality to individuals and political communities alike.”<sup>43</sup> Although this is an interesting finding, it is probably more indicative of generally liberal policy attitudes than a gender gap surrounding the use of force. Those who have progressive attitudes and support increased women’s rights in their patriarchal societies may also have more left leaning or dovish attitudes on the use of force.

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<sup>43</sup> Tessler, M., & Warriner, I. (1997). Gender, feminism, and attitudes toward international conflict: Exploring relationships with survey data from the Middle East. *World Politics*, 49(2), pp. 250-281.

In a follow-up study conducted in 1999, Tessler, Nachtwy and Grant extended the 1997 research by examining data from nine Middle Eastern nations including Israel and Palestine and adding additional data sets to their analysis of Israeli and Palestinian attitudes. In addition to the aforementioned questions asked in Tessler's 1997 study, the questions asked of Israelis in 1991 and 1993 included the following:

- Would you be willing to return either all or some of the occupied territories in return for a peace agreement with the Arabs?
- Do you prefer to address the problem of the West Bank and Gaza by exchanging them for peace, by giving the Palestinians partial autonomy, or by removing the Arab population from these territories?
- Do you agree or disagree that Israel should consider permitting the establishment of a Palestinian state?
- Do you think the real aim of the Palestinians is to establish a state alongside Israel or to destroy the Jewish state and drive out its population?

Questions asked of Palestinians between 1994 and 1996 included:

- Do you support or oppose the conduct of armed operations against Israeli targets in Gaza and Jericho?
- Do you agree or disagree that peace negotiations with Israel should continue?
- Do you or do you not expect the achievement of a lasting peace with Israel?
- Do you agree or disagree that peace negotiations with Israel should continue?
- Do you support or oppose the current peace process?
- Do you believe that final status negotiations can produce an acceptable solution to the conflict with Israel?

Tessler did not find a statistically significant gender difference in the responses to any of these survey questions. Just as he concluded in his 1997 study, Tessler states, "In contrast to findings from studies conducted in the United States and Europe, none of the nine Middle Eastern data sets yields a statistically significant relationship between sex and attitudes toward international conflict."<sup>44</sup> Tessler posits that these differences may stem either from the fact that the "women and peace hypothesis" is inaccurate or that unique attitudes towards religion, anti-

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<sup>44</sup> Tessler, M., Nachtwy, J., & Grant, A. (1999). "Further tests of the women and peace hypothesis: Evidence from cross-national survey research in the middle east." *International Studies Quarterly*, 43(3), pp. 519-531.



imperialism, and the roles of women in society in the Middle East may be the reason for this discrepancy. Despite this, Tessler doubts the veracity of these explanations and suggests instead that the pervasiveness of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the lives of Israeli and Palestinian men and women relative to the more distant conflicts faced by Western publics could be the primary reason for the lack of a gender gap. He writes that the “immediacy and intensity of concerns about national security, collective identity, and resource allocation” may prevent men and women from forming different opinions. In the Israeli-Palestinian context, a strong commitment to national identity could prevent women from adopting attitudes that might challenge the current status quo.

Though Tessler’s research is one of the few analyses that examines both Israeli and Palestinian public opinion data, a series of studies have also presented findings that appear to cast doubts on, or at least complicate, the “women and peace” hypothesis in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, research carried out by the Israeli Democracy Institute (IDI) by Arian, Herman, Shamir, Herzog and other scholars concluded that in contrast to data from Western democracies, there is no gender gap in Israeli elections or public opinion. IDI cites Arian’s 1998 research, which concluded that “when analyzed statistically, gender was never significantly correlated with voting preferences in Israeli elections.” However, he did note that in the 1996 elections, women showed more support in that election for Shimon Peres than for Benjamin Netanyahu and, on the party ballots, they cast more votes for Labor than for Likud.<sup>45</sup> The IDI’s conclusion on the issue of gender in Israeli politics is that, “there is no ‘women’s voice’ in Israeli politics” and “Israeli women do not express a more ‘dovish’ stance than Israeli men.” The IDI puts forth a few theories to explain the lack of a gender gap, including the fact

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<sup>45</sup> Is there a “Women’s voice” in politics?” *Israeli Democracy Institute* (4/16/2008).  
<http://www.idi.org.il/sites/english/parliament/Pages/IsThereaWomensVoiceinPolitics.aspx#p2>

that women do not have an independent voice in Israel or that “new politics” have not been fully developed, because security and defense remain such salient issues. The IDI also explains that since defense issues are traditionally male dominated, “women make a special effort to outdo men in their militaristic and defense-oriented stances.”<sup>46</sup>

Gaila Golan also questions the existence of a gender gap in Israel in her study on militarization and gender in Israel. She finds that during the First Intifada, although women were generally more fearful than men, and single women were more dovish than married men or women, there were virtually no attitude differences on questions of security and territorial compromise. She hypothesizes that this may be because the entire Israeli population had become more dovish during the intifada, causing the unusually dovish attitudes of men to eliminate the gender gap.<sup>47</sup> In a second study analyzing polling data of Israelis on the use of force and willingness to compromise and negotiate with Palestinians throughout the 1980’s, Golan found women slightly more inclined to compromise and negotiate than men, as opposed to employing force. However, she found that men and women both exhibited greater dovishness with higher education and religious women were generally more hawkish than religious men. Finding no gender gap in her analysis of Knesset elections in the 1980’s, she concludes that “Israeli women do not appear to be more peace loving than men.”<sup>48</sup>

In contrast to studies that focus on gender gaps in support for the use of military force, Yaacov Boaz Yablon took a more “positive” approach, comparing the willingness of Israeli male and female university students to participate in encounters with Arabs in order to enhance peaceful relationships. Yablon studied participants’ willingness to participate in peace

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Golan, G. (1997). “Militarization and gender: The Israeli experience.” *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 20(5-6), 581-586.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

encounters over a period of 16 months, and he concluded that there were no statistically significant differences found between men and women in their willingness to engage in peace encounters. Interestingly, however, he found that among participants who expressed willingness to participate in peace encounters, women maintained positive attitudes over the entire sixteen month period at a much higher rate than men. Overall men were more inclined to change to a negative stance during the course of the study. Thus, although Yablon finds no gender gap in terms of the initial willingness to compromise or dovishness of attitudes, he concludes that “These findings may have an important contribution for both understanding differences between men and women in peace orientation and for the enhancement of peace-building activities, especially in order to resolve intractable conflicts.”<sup>49</sup> Such results may indicate that women have more faith in the efficacy of peace negotiations than men and, once Israel becomes involved in peace talks, would be more inclined to remain at the negotiation table.

Providing another look at the gender gap in Israel, Yael Yishai examines Israeli Jewish and Israeli Arab women’s unique positions as they engage in both a nationalist struggle and a fight for women’s rights. Using her own survey data as well as data collected for pre-election surveys, Yishai finds that Jewish women tend to vote and display more hawkish tendencies than men on security issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She finds that they are less willing to return territories and more supportive of security spending. She posits that because Israeli women are unable to engage on the frontlines of the Israeli military, they feel more compelled to prove their nationalism or their jingoistic, universally pro-Israeli stances on security issues. She

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<sup>49</sup> Yablon, Y. B. (2009). Gender differences in the consistency of attitudes towards peace. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 32(4), 305-310.

writes that women are under pressure “to super conform to national-oriented norms” as “Their contribution to the welfare of the nation must be displayed in nationalistic advocacy.”<sup>50</sup>

Although much of the research on gender and public opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that focuses on Israeli attitudes casts doubt on the women and peace hypothesis, these findings are neither fully conclusive nor universal. For example, in his book *Empowering Israeli Women: The Gender Gap, Women's Issues and the Vote*, Craig Charney argues that “differences on the basis of gender been widely observed in regard to questions of peace and security.”<sup>51</sup> Using data from the 1998 election, Charney finds that women favor a larger withdrawal from the administered territories. He also suggests that their attitudes are influenced by “their greater concern, as compared with men, for the danger to family members on military duty.” He then concludes that women were almost twice as likely to cite concern that their sons or husbands could be hurt in the territories as a reason for criticizing the lack of progress in the peace process.<sup>52</sup>

Analysis of the few studies that have dealt with gender and Palestinian public opinion indicates that Tessler's conclusion that male and female attitudes do not differ on issues of force, security, and the peace process requires further attention. Interestingly, in one of the few studies that focus on gender differences among Arab Israelis, Yishai finds Arab women to have more polarized attitudes than Arab men as their survey responses are both more moderate and more militant. She explains that for Arab Israeli women, “Being exposed to the syndrome of ‘double disadvantage’ of being females in a traditional society and members of a minority group in a nationalistic society, Arab women tend to exhibit more extreme attitudes than their men.”<sup>53</sup> Thus

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<sup>50</sup> Yishai, Y. (1993). *Between the flag and the banner: Women in Israeli politics*. Albany: SUNY Press.109.

<sup>51</sup> Charney, Craig. Women's Empowerment. *Israel Women's Network*. Jerusalem: 1998.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Yishai, Y. (1993). *Between the flag and the banner: Women in Israeli politics*. Albany: SUNY Press.109.

although Yashai does not examine the attitudes of Palestinians living in the West Bank or Gaza strip, she finds that at least Arab Israeli women exhibit more “extreme” attitudes range from dovish to hawkish relative to those of men.

In his analysis of Palestinian public opinion and election data in the Second Intifada, Jaeger finds that women show a greater tendency to support Hamas relative to men and a larger percentage of females support peace negotiations with Israel. Using polls from the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center (JMCC), Jaegar found that for every question, females expressed more moderate views than males, but expressed a higher level of trust in Hamas. Jaegar thus concludes that females show a higher support for Hamas because they are greater beneficiaries of the social services provided by the organization.<sup>54</sup> Corroborating this finding, a 1994 study by the Center for Palestinian Research Studies (CPRS) on political affiliation among Palestinian women found that women disproportionately support both moderate and religiously conservative political parties. For example, the most support for Hizb el-Sha'b, which is one of the most liberal Palestinian political parties, comes from women. Additionally, supporters of both Hamas and Islamic Jihad which advocate Islamic and more extremist forms of government are disproportionately female.<sup>55</sup>

### **Competing Hypotheses**

While the studies of gender and public opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are relatively limited and inconsistent, other demographic correlates of Israeli and Palestinian public opinion have been studied in more detail. Although I hypothesize that gender does play a role in

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<sup>54</sup> David A. Jaeger & Esteban F. Klor & Sami H. Miaari & M. Daniele Paserman, 2008. "The Struggle for Palestinian Hearts and Minds: Violence and Public Opinion in the Second Intifada," NBER Working Papers 13956, *National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc*

<sup>55</sup>“Palestinian Elections, Participation of Women, and Other Related Issues” Center for Palestinian Research and Studies. (April 1994) <http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/cprspolls/94/poll8.html>

shaping Israeli and Palestinian attitudes, these other factors are also important and must be taken into account when analyzing the gender gap in Israel and Palestine.

### **Alternative Demographic Correlates of Israeli Public Opinion**

Religiosity is one of the strongest correlates of attitudes towards national security issues in Israel. As the Israeli Institute for National Security Study reports, “the extent of the relationship between one’s self-identification as to religious behavior and one’s responses to the questionnaire is of a different magnitude than that for all the other demographic indicators.”<sup>56</sup> Between 2005 and 2007, for example the percentage of secular Jews supporting a Palestinian state was more than double that of religious Jews, and similar statistically significant differences in attitude were found on other salient issues in the peace process and towards national security more broadly.<sup>57</sup> This split between the religious and secular communities in Israel is noteworthy and as the INSS reports, it “poses a great challenge for Israeli society.”

Ideological self identification and partisanship also plays an important role in shaping Israeli attitudes as those who self identify as left leaning or support political parties such as the Labor party or Kadima tend to be more dovish than those who identify as right leaning or support conservative parties such as Likud. That being said, ideological self identification is not necessarily clear cut in the Israeli context. As Yehuda Ben Meir describes, “Contrary to the conventional approach that places individuals along a continuum such as ‘left-right,’ ‘liberal-conservative,’ or ‘dove hawk,’ the basic premise of the value equilibrium approach is that every individual embraces a number of values, some of which may under certain circumstances lead to contradictory opinions or behavior.” These values, support for which has been included in many Israeli public surveys are:

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<sup>56</sup> Ben Meir, Yehuda and Dafna Shaked. “The People Speak: Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2005-2007” *Institute for National Security Studies*. 2008. 35.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

- a. a country with a Jewish majority
- b. Greater Israel
- c. a democratic country (equal political rights for everyone)
- d. a state of peace (low probability of war).

Ranking of these values tends to have greater impact on shaping attitudes than ideological or political self evaluation alone.<sup>58</sup> In his book *Security Threatened: Surveying Israeli Public Opinion on Peace and War*, Asher Arian corroborates this finding. He demonstrates that contrary to popular opinion, the Israeli public is not divided into two rigid ideological camps. He finds that many Israelis are not firmly committed to the agenda of either Labor or Likud and can be persuaded to join either party given the right circumstances.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to religion and ideological values, a few other demographic factors have also been shown to shape Israeli attitudes. According to INSS data, older respondents are less hawkish than younger respondents, and more educated respondents are more dovish.<sup>60</sup> In his evaluation of other demographic factors, Arian comes to similar conclusions. However, he notes that while secular respondents, older respondents, and more educated responses are all somewhat more dovish than their respective counterparts, these differences are smaller than commonly assumed.<sup>61</sup> In moving forward with my analysis of gender differences in Israeli public opinion on national security issues, it will be important to control for these competing demographic correlates— specifically religiosity and ideology, which seem to play the largest roles in shaping attitudes in Israel.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 33.

<sup>59</sup> Arian, Asher, *Security Threatened: Surveying Israeli Opinion on Peace and War*, Cambridge Studies in Political Psychology and Public Opinion Cambridge and Tel Aviv: Cambridge University Press and the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 1995. 209-224.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Alternative Demographic Correlates of Palestinian Public Opinion**

On the Palestinian side, partisanship is also a complex determinant of attitudes. While partisanship plays an important role in shaping opinions toward security and peace, with supporters of Fatah being more dovish than Hamas supporters, this relationship is nuanced. Palestinians have many competing reasons for supporting these political parties, from religiosity to a need for social services. Also, it is important to note that there are no clear differences between Fatah and Hamas supporters regarding demographic factors including areas and types of residency, refugee status, marital status and age.<sup>62</sup>

Despite this, each of these individual demographic factors are correlates of public opinion. In terms of age, older Palestinians are more likely to support negotiations and oppose violence than younger respondents. Interestingly, however, Jaeger finds that individuals born between 1976 and 1979 (ages 14-17 at signing of Oslo agreements) express significantly more moderate political preferences than what would be predicted by their age. On the other hand, individuals born between 1970 and 1973 (ages 14-17 at the outburst of First Intifada) have significantly more radical positions than what would be predicted by their age.<sup>63</sup>

In terms of education, those Palestinians with the least formal education (elementary school or less) tend to be the most supportive of peace negotiations compared to those with more advanced degrees. That being said, Jaeger finds that those with the highest levels of education (masters degree or greater) tend to be somewhat more dovish than the majority population.<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, a variety of studies of Palestinian support for violence have found that higher degrees of education and higher living standards do not correlate with more dovish attitudes or

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<sup>62</sup> Jaeger et al. "The Struggle for Palestinian Hearts and Minds: Violence and Public Opinion in the Second Intifada."

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*



less support for violence.<sup>65</sup> This may be because in the Palestinian territories, obtaining a higher level of education does not guarantee employment, opportunities, or hope for the future and may breed pessimism or extremism. Region of residence seems to have little impact on attitudes generally though those who live in refugee camps are somewhat more hawkish.<sup>66</sup> As with Israeli data, when examining gender differences in Palestinian public opinion it will be important to control for these other demographic factors.

### **A Revised Research Agenda**

Although much of the existing literature on gender and Israeli and Palestinian public opinion seems to indicate that the “women in peace” hypothesis and other theories on gender, politics, and the use of force, simply does not apply in the Israeli-Palestinian context, the noteworthy emergence of female peace activist groups in both Israel and Palestine, in addition to the observance of unique gender differences in Jaeger’s and Yishai’s Israeli and Palestinian data and Charney’s Israeli data, indicate that Tessler’s conclusions may not tell the full story of gender differences in attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I argue that the survey questions used by Tessler and other scholars who have analyzed gender differences in Israel and Palestine do not adequately test for a gender gap in attitudes towards the use of force or the peace process.

While gender and public opinion research indicates that women exhibit less support for military force and violence, higher levels of threat perception, and less support for defense spending than men, almost no survey questions used in past studies specifically address these issues or involve wording or imagery that we might expect to reveal gender differences. In order to address this gap in the literature, in my study of gender differences in Israeli and Palestinian public

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<sup>65</sup> Krueger, Alan B. “Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?” Princeton University and NBER. 2002.

<sup>66</sup> Jaeger et.al. "The Struggle for Palestinian Hearts and Minds: Violence and Public Opinion in the Second Intifada."

opinion I examine four types of questions that gender and public opinion research and theory indicate will be more likely to uncover gender gaps. In the next four chapters I explore attitudes towards threat perception, test the “women and peace” hypothesis, examine support for violence and the use of force, and finally, analyze Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards defense and social spending.

Although the few existing studies on gender in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have largely concluded that gender gaps do not exist, the above literature indicates that it is unlikely that the relationships regarding gender and the use of force, threat perception, support of violence, and defense spending that have appeared in numerous international contexts would not apply to Israelis and Palestinians. With this literature in mind, in the following chapters I undertake a more specific and aggressive approach to uncovering the gender gap between Israeli and Palestinian men and women.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Gender Gap in Israeli and Palestinian Threat Perception**

In a protracted violent conflict in which not only personal security but the very sovereignty and survival of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples have come under attack, threat perception has played a key role in shaping attitudes towards the peace process. Israeli and Palestinian perceptions of threat, understandings of security issues, and evaluations of one another's aspirations, are rooted in their mutually tumultuous histories and have often hindered successful compromise. Despite the critical importance of threat perception in understanding Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards the peace process, and a substantial body of literature pointing to the gendered nature of threat perception in other international contexts, past studies of the gender gap in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion have neglected to explicitly analyze gender differences in threat perception on both sides.

In order to help close this hole in the literature, in this chapter I examine gender differences in threat perception by analyzing Israeli and Palestinian survey data. In order to contextualize my own research, I begin by describing the historical roots and trajectory of Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards threat and security over the past two decades. I then present my hypothesis, methodology, and the results of my own analysis of gender differences in Israeli and Palestinian threat perception. Next I present the results of three way cross tabulations controlling for other demographic factors that could shape threat perception. Finally, I conclude by demonstrating the importance of threat perception in shaping attitudes towards the peace process and its implications for the remainder of my study of gender difference in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion.

## **Historical Roots of Israeli and Palestinian Threat Perception**

Both Israelis and Palestinians share a common historical legacy of threats to their very existence— both as individuals and as peoples. Their histories are marked by injustice, displacement, violence and the persistent struggle to survive. It is therefore not surprising that both societies have been so preoccupied with threat and security concerns. Studies of threat perception in a variety of international contexts have found that societies mired in intractable conflict are frequently dominated by what Daniel Bar Tal calls “a collective fear orientation...based on the stressful nature of intractable conflict caused by threats and dangers to society members and to society as a whole.”<sup>1</sup> Thus the turbulent pasts of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples have shaped their modern perceptions of threat and security.

### **Origins of Israeli Threat Perception**

In 1896, Theodor Herzl wrote of the Jewish people that “no nation on earth has survived such struggles and sufferings as we have gone through.”<sup>2</sup> Almost fifty years before the Nazis would exterminate over six million European Jews, the father of modern Zionism was keenly—perhaps prophetically—aware of the vulnerability of the Jews and their need for security. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the physical and cultural survival of the Jewish people seemed at risk. Many Jews worldwide, who had never ascribed to Zionism or considered immigration to Palestine, became fervently convinced of the need to move to Israel and found a Jewish state. Palestine was advertised by Zionist leaders as “a land without people for a people without land.”<sup>3</sup> Faced with strict immigration quotas from the U.S. and desperate to find a home free from oppression, Holocaust refugees flocked to Palestine.

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<sup>1</sup> Bar-Tal, Daniel. “Collective Emotional Orientation of Fear in Societies Engulfed by Intractable Conflict.” *Political Psychology*. 22 (2001):601-27.

<sup>2</sup> Herzl, Theodor. *The Jewish State*. Dover Publications, 1989, 56.

<sup>3</sup> Souss, Ibrahim. *Letter to a Jewish Friend*. London: Quartet. 1989,47.

However, in the aftermath of World War II, emigrants to Palestine soon found that their struggles were not over. In the years preceding the creation of Israel, Arabs worked to stop Jewish immigration. Furthermore, following the Israeli declaration of independence in May of 1948, Palestinians attempted to destroy the fledgling Jewish nation with military support from the surrounding Arab states. From 1948 until the signing of the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, Israelis felt threatened by hostile neighbors and fought wars in 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982.<sup>4</sup> More recently, Israelis have dealt with terrorist attacks and suicide bombings that have injured both soldiers and civilians, and heightened the Israeli sense of insecurity.

This historical legacy of religious persecution and threat to survival became an essential part of Jewish nationalism and later Israeli identity, playing a key role in both historical and modern perceptions of threat and security.<sup>5</sup> As Hannah Hertzog writes, Israeli security “assumes almost mythical and catastrophic dimensions...[it is]...associated with the ability of the Jewish state to remain sovereign.”<sup>6</sup> Alongside the real dangers Israelis have faced over the past six decades, as Amos Elon describes, “The lingering memory of the Holocaust makes Arab threats of annihilation sound plausible.” This history has left what Elon calls an “indelible mark” on the national psychology, the conduct of foreign affairs, and on politics, education, arts and literature.<sup>7</sup> Israeli textbooks, popular literature, the press, and political rhetoric all highlight the existential threats to the Jewish state and help foster a cultural climate of fear. Providing an example of this sentiment, in 1987 Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin wrote, “In the course of its long 4,000-year-old journey across the stage of the world...in every generation they rise up to

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<sup>4</sup> Bar-Tal, “Collective Emotional Orientation of Fear in Societies Engulfed by Intractable Conflict.”

<sup>5</sup> Lieberfeld, Daniel. *Talking with the Enemy: Negotiation and Threat Perception in South Africa and Israel/Palestine*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Hanna Herzog and Ronen Shamir, “Negotiated Society? Media Discourse on Israeli Jewish/Arab Relations,” *Israel Social Science Research*, 9(1&2) (1994) 82.

<sup>7</sup> Elon, Amos. *The Israelis Founders and Sons*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971. 199.

destroy us, and we must remember that this could happen to us in the future.”<sup>8</sup> This feeling of heightened threat perception has become engrained in the Israeli psyche and continues to shape attitudes towards threat and security today.

### **Origins of Palestinian Threat Perception**

While the creation of Israel offered Jewish victims of Nazism statehood and relative security, for Palestinians it has meant tragedy and oppression of their own. As Jews came to Palestine to build new lives, Palestinians found their world turned upside-down. As Ibrahim Souss demands in his *Letter to a Jewish Friend*,

“Did you really believe, even for a moment, that the rough hands of the Arabs who had tilled the land of Palestine, who had sowed the crops, grafted the plum trees, pruned the fig trees, lopped the branches off the lemon trees, trimmed the vines, that these hands could ever forget; or that the scent of the orange blossom could ever be obliterated from our collective memory?”<sup>9</sup>

As much as the Jewish people needed a safe haven, Palestine was not simply empty land open for Jewish settlement. Under the 1947 UN partition plan, Jewish settlers were given 57% of Palestine, including the fertile coastal region, even though they comprised only 33% of the population and owned just 7% of the land at the time. This division gave Jews three times the economic revenues that were accruing to the Palestinians.<sup>10</sup>

It seems only natural that Palestinians would oppose this partition plan, which meant the unequal division of their land and the effective expulsion of their people. Desperate to stop the partition, the Arab League called for a single unified democratic Palestine. The organization demanded that only the Jewish immigrants and their descendents who had arrived prior to the Balfour Declaration be considered citizens.<sup>11</sup> This caused Arab protests to fall on deaf ears, both

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<sup>8</sup> Bar-Tal, “Collective Emotional Orientation of Fear in Societies Engulfed by Intractable Conflict.”

<sup>9</sup> Souss, Ibrahim. *Letter to a Jewish Friend*. London: Quartet, 1989. pp 48

<sup>10</sup> Gerner, Deborah J. *One Land, Two Peoples: the Conflict over Palestine*. Boulder: Westview, 1991.45.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.

among Israelis and the international community. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the insistence that no more Jewish immigrants be admitted to Palestine seemed irrational and unjust. In this political climate, Palestinian cries of desperation were ignored. Following the passage of the UN partition plan and the Israeli declaration of independence, war erupted in May of 1948. Israeli forces extended control to strategically vital parts of Palestine. After the war, out of the original Palestinian population of about 900,000, only about 120,000 remained in what became the state of Israel.<sup>12</sup>

As Daniel Lieberfeld writes, “For Arabs in Palestine the Zionist goal of a Jewish homeland in which Jewish interests would be paramount posed a particular threat...As dispersed refugees living under...Israeli military occupation, Palestinians began to seek self-determination and statehood as a means of protection and survival.”<sup>13</sup> Without a state, Palestinians have faced Israeli military occupation or exile as vulnerable refugees in neighboring Arab states. The precarious nature of their position is highlighted by the fact that between 35,000 and 45,000 Palestinians were killed in fighting with Israel or related civil conflicts in the two decades following the 1967 war.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, in the occupied territories approximately 350,000 Palestinians were detained and 100,000 received prison sentences between 1967 and the mid 1980’s.<sup>15</sup> This historical legacy of stateless insecurity has informed Palestinians’ modern sense of threat perception.

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<sup>12</sup> Gerner, *One Land, Two Peoples*, 54.

<sup>13</sup> Lieberfeld, *Talking with the Enemy*. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Sayigh, Yezid. “Redefining the Basics: Sovereignty and Security of the Palestinian State.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Summer, 1995), pp. 5-19

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

## **The Modern Trajectory of Israeli and Palestinian Threat Perception**

In order to give context to my study of gender differences in threat perception, it is important to have a sense of overall trends in Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards threat and security. While this overview is not exhaustive, it touches upon survey data collected by major Israeli and Palestinian polling organizations and provides a useful understanding of the modern evolution of threat perception in Israel and Palestine.

### **Israeli Trajectory**

Polling organizations and researchers have asked Israelis survey questions that deal with threat perception since the late 1960's. Analysis of this data indicates that Israelis are well informed of current events, and that Israeli attitudes are highly responsive to changing levels of violence, policy developments, and the status of peace negotiations. Early polls found high levels of worry and concern for personal security among respondents. Between 1968 and 1978, for example, over 80% of Israelis feared terrorist attacks.<sup>16</sup> In his 2001 study, David Bar-Tal provides a through overview of the early trajectory of Israeli public opinion data on threat perception. As figure 3.1 demonstrates, from 1970 to 1971 about 71% of Israeli Jews felt threatened by Arabs and were concerned about their personal security. By 1972 this percentage had fallen to about 60%, but following the 1973 war with Arab states it rose to about 90%. Throughout the mid 1970's, worry regarding personal safety and fears of attack remained high. However, following Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977, fears were assuaged somewhat and the percentage of Israeli Jews expressing security worries fell to 50%. The optimism that emerged following Sadat's initiation of the peace process with Israel quickly evaporated, and by 1978 perceived levels of threat were on the rise once again.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Bar-Tal, "Collective Emotional Orientation of Fear in Societies Engulfed by Intractable Conflict."

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 3.1**

**Level of Israeli Worry 1971-1978 (Bar-Tal)**

<b>% Worried</b>	<b>Year</b>
71%	1971
60%	1972
90%	1973
50%	1977

In the early 1980's threat perception remained high, especially during Israel's war with Lebanon, which lasted from 1982 to 1985. However, by the end of the decade, this sense of threat was somewhat mitigated by developments in the Arab world that improved Israel's strategic position.<sup>18</sup> The peace treaty with Egypt had fragmented Arab unity against Israel. Furthermore, in the early 1980's the Iran-Iraq war diverted attention away from the Arab-Israeli conflict. Additionally, in this period Soviet military and economic aid to Syria decreased at a time when Syria had become a serious threat to Israel. By the mid 1980's, perhaps for the first time since the creation of the Jewish state, Israel's major Arab rivals lacked the military power to pose any real threat to Israel. As Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin noted in July of 1985, "wars intended to destroy Israel were no longer on the Arab political agenda."<sup>19</sup> While threat and security concerns hardly disappeared in this period, public perception of threat and worry over security concerns fell slightly in the years preceding the First Intifada.

The outbreak of the First Intifada in December of 1987 had a dramatic impact on Israeli threat perception. This reaction was logical as the intifada marked a period of increased violence and tension between Israelis and Palestinians. In 1987 large numbers of Palestinians began participating in strikes and public demonstrations that quickly escalated into violent

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<sup>18</sup> Inbar, Efraim. *Rabin and Israel's National Security*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1999. 21.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

confrontations between Palestinian protesters and the Israeli Defense Forces. This was followed by politically motivated assassinations and attacks on Israeli targets by Palestinians. The intifada lasted until September of 1993, when the Israeli government signed the Oslo Peace Accords with the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and the violence decreased dramatically. As Figure 3.2 indicates, paralleling events on the ground, in 1988 over half of Israelis reported that their attitudes towards security had changed as a result of the intifada and almost 90% of respondents reported fear of personal injury or injury of family members due to terrorist attacks.<sup>20</sup> By 1992, over three quarters of respondents still expressed this concern, and the numbers remained in this range through 1996.<sup>21</sup>

By 1999 this number had fallen to 56%, but the outbreak of the Second Intifada marked another spike in threat perception with 78% of Israelis reporting fear of personal injury or injury to a family member in 2001 and 2003.<sup>22</sup> Again, this increased fear of attack came predictably in response to Palestinian violence. From September of 2000 to January 2005, 1,000 Israelis were killed as a result of the Second Intifada and during this time there was what Don Jaeger describes as a “vicious cycle of violence from which it is impossible to escape.”<sup>23</sup> The Second Intifada officially came to an end with the April 2005 Sharm al-Sheikh summit, assuaging Israeli security fears and causing the percent of Israelis fearing personal attack to fall to 60%, where it remained through 2009.<sup>24</sup> In recent years Israeli threat perception has hovered at its lowest since the outbreak of the First Intifada in 1988. Thus threat perception has ebbed and flowed in response

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<sup>20</sup> INSS 1989

<sup>21</sup> IES 1992 IES 1996

<sup>22</sup> IES 2001 and 2003

<sup>23</sup> Jaeger, David A., and M. Daniele Paserman. 2008. "The Cycle of Violence? An Empirical Analysis of Fatalities in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict." *American Economic Review*, 98(4): 1591–1604.

<sup>24</sup> IES 2006 and 2009

to levels of violence, with the percentage of Israelis fearing personal attack or injury never falling below 50%.

**Figure 3.2**

**Level of Israeli Worry 1988-2009 (INSS Data)**

<b>% Worried</b>	<b>Year</b>
90%	1988
75%	1992
76%	1996
56%	1999
78%	2001
78%	2003
60%	2005
59%	2009

**Palestinian Trajectory:**

Because regular polling of Palestinians did not begin until the aftermath of the Oslo Accords, very little Palestinian survey data is available prior to the mid 1990's. Since the majority of Palestinian survey data has only been collected in the past ten years, it is impossible to provide a detailed trajectory of Palestinian threat perception that is comparable to the Israeli one outlined above. Additionally, questions about threat perception in particular have only been asked by particular survey organizations, further limiting available data. Nonetheless, there is a small body of survey data assessing Palestinian threat perception since the 1990's, and more comprehensive data is available for the 2000's. Like trends in Israeli threat perception, the trajectory of Palestinian threat perception seems to move in response to events on the ground—specifically the levels of violence and hardship that Palestinians are exposed to in their everyday lives.

In the aftermath of the 1993 Oslo Accords, Palestinians' threat perception and security fears were low. The majority of Palestinians saw hope for the future, and many felt more confident in the efficacy of peace negotiations than they had been previously.<sup>25</sup> This sentiment continued as limited Palestinian autonomy was put into effect according to the terms of the Oslo agreement. As Figure 3.3 demonstrates, in early 1995, 49% of Palestinians reported feeling more secure following the implementation of autonomy.<sup>26</sup> However, the opening of a tunnel along parts of the Western Wall, which was followed by several days of Palestinian-Israeli armed confrontations in September of 1996, heightened threat perceptions.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, in March of 1996, following a series of Hamas bombings, three quarters of Palestinians living in Jerusalem feared Israeli revenge.<sup>28</sup> 1997 polls of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza found continued pessimism and feelings of insecurity in the aftermath of the bombings.<sup>29</sup> In 1999 54% of Palestinians felt that their security situation had improved further in following the 1999 Sharm al-Sheikh agreement which set out a timetable for a permanent peace agreement.<sup>30</sup> However, this climate of increased Palestinian security did not last for long.

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<sup>25</sup> Shikaki, Khalil. *Willingness to Compromise: Palestinian Public Opinion and the Peace Process*. Diane Publishing. 2009,8.

<sup>26</sup> Jerusalem Media and Communication Center ( JMCC) Public Opinion Poll No. 7 On Palestinian Attitudes to more than one year of Autonomy June 1995 (Question 2)

<sup>27</sup> Shikaki, Khalil. *Willingness to Compromise: Palestinian Public Opinion and the Peace Process*.

<sup>28</sup> JMCC Public Opinion Poll No. 14 On Attitudes of East Jerusalemites on the Recent Hamas Bombings. March 1996

<sup>29</sup> JMCC 1997 Polls

<sup>30</sup> رقم 32 آب / question 61999 – المواقف الفلسطينية تجاه السياسة JMCC استطلاع مركز القدس للإعلام والإتصال

**Figure 3.3**

**Palestinian Feelings of Insecurity 1995-2006 (PSR & Birzeit University Data)**

<b>% Feeling Insecure</b>	<b>Year</b>
49%	1995
75%	1996
69%	1997
54%	1999
18%	2000
77%	2001
51%	2004
83%	2005
74%	2006

Analysis of Palestinian threat perception survey data collected between 1999 and 2006 demonstrates that Palestinian feelings of worry and personal security were largely linked to increased levels of violence during the Second Intifada. The months following the eruption of the intifada in September of 2000 are, according to researchers at Birzeit University, thought to be some of “the most difficult periods that Palestinian society has ever lived through.”<sup>31</sup> During this time, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip experienced numerous clashes with the Israeli Defense Forces that resulted in hundreds of Palestinian deaths. These casualties included many children, and thousands of Palestinians were wounded. For the first time in decades, Israel used artillery and tank fire in Palestinian cities and towns that led to the destruction of many houses and security establishments. Additionally, the border closures that occurred during the

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<sup>31</sup> Birzeit University Poll 2

first five weeks of the Intifada alone led to a spike in unemployment, and economic losses were over \$500 million in this period.<sup>32</sup>

Public opinion data on threat perception during the Second Intifada relates closely to the conditions in the Gaza Strip and West Bank in that period. As Figure 3.3 indicates, in August of 2000, a month before the outbreak of the Second Intifada, only 18% of Palestinians reported feeling unsafe with regard to their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their families.<sup>33</sup> Just a few months later, over half of respondents expressed security concerns.<sup>34</sup> By 2001 77% of respondents felt somewhat insecure and in 2003 about two thirds of Palestinians felt no sense of security for themselves, their families, or their possessions.<sup>35</sup> During this period Israeli forces had imposed strict closure all over the Gaza Strip and West Bank. For example, they erected hundreds of roadblocks and prevented Palestinians from gaining access to work, education, and healthcare. Furthermore, many Palestinians were killed and injured as result of clashes with Israeli forces.<sup>36</sup> In 2004, Israeli attacks demolished hundreds of houses, and 61% of Palestinian respondents reported feelings of insecurity for themselves and their families.<sup>37</sup> In 2005, right before the signing of the Sharm al-Sheikh agreement that officially ended the Second Intifada, 83% of Palestinians were concerned for their personal safety.<sup>38</sup> By 2006 this percentage had fallen slightly, perhaps reflecting a decrease in violence. In this way, like the trajectory of Israeli threat perception, conditions on the ground are directly linked to Palestinian feelings of threat and insecurity.

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<sup>32</sup> Birzeit Poll 2

<sup>33</sup> Birzeit Poll August 2000

<sup>34</sup> Birzeit Poll 2 2000

<sup>35</sup> Birzeit polls 3 & 14

<sup>36</sup> Birzeit poll 14

<sup>37</sup> Birzeit poll 16

<sup>38</sup> Palestinian Center for Public Opinion April 2005 Poll

## **Hypothesis**

Because threat perception is central to the historical and present status of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and also because of its gendered nature in other international contexts, I have chosen to investigate how Israeli and Palestinian men and women differ in their perceptions of threats and in their views of one another's aspirations. As the review of gender and threat perception literature outlined in Chapter 2 indicates, as mothers and vulnerable members of society who do not fight on the front lines, Israeli and Palestinian women might be more fearful and thus would perceive higher levels of threat relative to men. I therefore hypothesize that Israeli and Palestinian women will perceive threats at higher rates than men and be more afraid for their personal security and that of their families. On the other hand, women have been shown to see the common humanity in "enemy" populations. This female ability to separate political elements of the conflict from human ones has been cited as a cause of the success of female peace activism and engagement by Israeli and Palestinian women.<sup>39</sup> Thus in terms of assessing "enemy" aspirations, I hypothesize that Israeli women will be slightly more sympathetic to Palestinians or Arabs given their ability to identify with would-be enemies on a more human level in other contexts outlined in Chapter 2. That being said, strong fears of attack may lessen these conciliatory sentiments, causing women to view enemy aspirations with equal or greater suspicion than men.

## **Methodology**

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<sup>39</sup> Babbit, Eileen and Tamara Pearson. "Women and the Art of Peacemaking."

In order to test these hypotheses, the core of my analysis will come from the Israeli Election Study, the the Birzeit University Center for Research and Development Studies, and data collected by the Centre for Democratic Control of armed forces (DCAF). The questions that I will use to assess threat perception include:

- To what extent are you worried that you or your family members may be harmed by Arabs in your daily life?
- At the present time, do you feel secure about yourself, your family, and your property?

In order to assess how Israelis view Palestinian goals and aspirations I will use the following question:

- What do you think are the aspirations of Arabs (or Palestinians) in the long run?

Unfortunately I was not able to gain access to survey data that would allow me to analyze evaluations of “enemy aspirations” on the Palestinian side. I first assess Israeli and Palestinian attitude trends over time and then break the data down by gender to ascertain whether or not there is an Israeli or Palestinian gender gap in attitudes on these issues.

## **Israeli Results**

In order to examine gender differences in Israeli threat perception, I used a survey question from the Israeli Election Studies that was asked in seven different election surveys from 1992 to 2009. While the wording varied slightly in different years, the most common phrasing of the question was: “To what extent are you worried that you or a family member will be injured by Arabs?” Respondents were then presented with four potential responses: “Very worried,” “Worried,” “Not Worried,” and “Not Worried at all.” When evaluating gender differences in threat perception I chose to compare the percentages of male and female respondents that

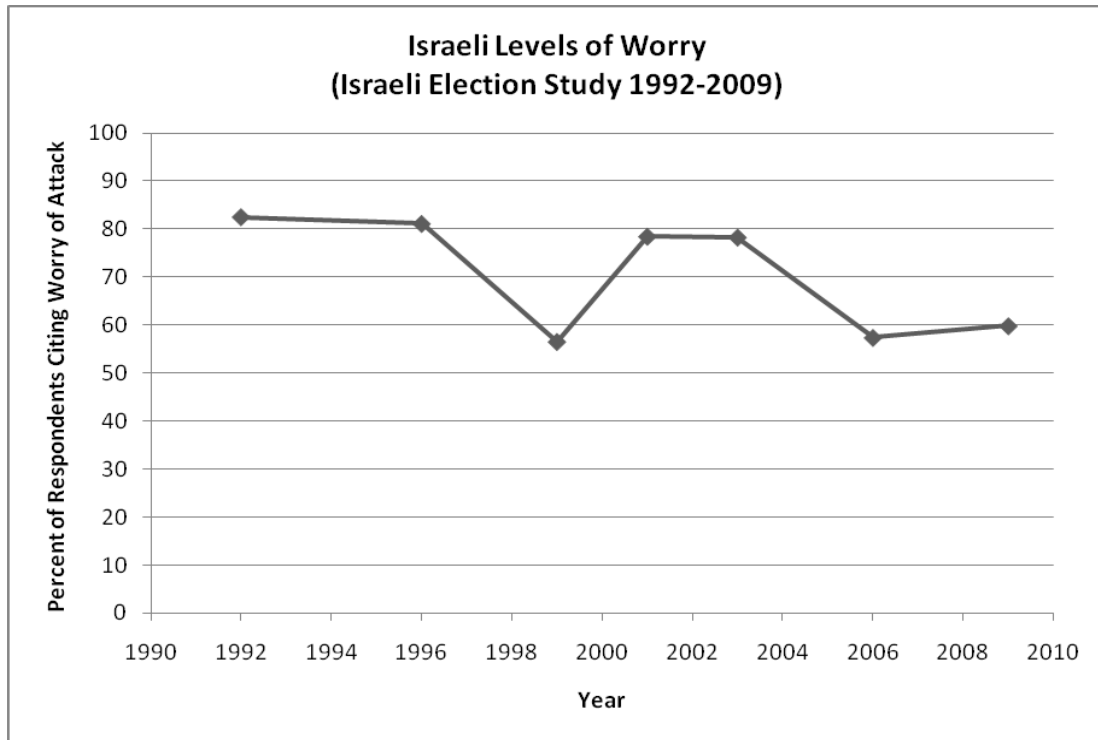


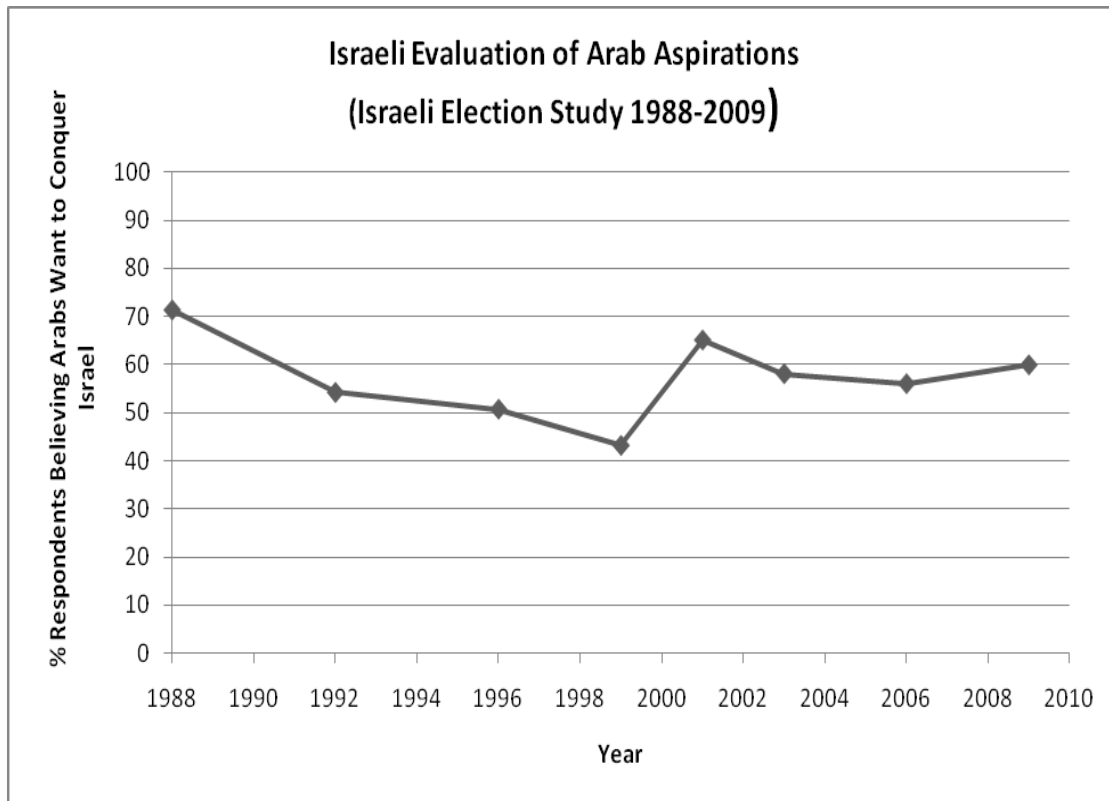
reported that they were either “Worried” or “Very Worried” about personal attack or injury or attacks on their family members.

In examining potential gender differences in Israeli evaluations of Arab aspirations, I used a question from the Israeli Election Studies that was asked in eight different election surveys from 1988 to 2009. Again, while the wording varied slightly in different years, the most common phrasing of the question was: “In your opinion, what is the aspiration/ultimate goal of the Arabs?” Respondents were then presented with four potential responses: 1) to regain a part of the occupied territories; 2) to regain all of the occupied territories; 3) to conquer the state of Israel; and 4) to conquer the country and to eliminate a substantial part of the Jewish population of the state of Israel. In order to examine gender differences in assessments of Arab or “enemy” aspirations, I chose to compare the percentages of males and females believing that Arabs wished to “conquer” the state of Israel, as these responses were the most negative and thus might correspond to the threat perception responses of being “Worried.”

Figure 3.4 shows both the level of Israeli worriedness and evaluation of Arab aspirations. If these two survey questions are both accurate measures of threat perception, I would expect the two graphs to follow relatively similar trajectories. As is evident below, the graphs are very similar. I also wanted to ensure that the data reflected the patterns found by past researchers, as described in the previous section of this chapter. In both graphs a clear drop off is evident in the decade following the First Intifada, especially in the graph of Arab aspirations. This is followed by a spike in threat perception with the outbreak of the Second Intifada, which tapers off following the 2005 Sharm al-Sheikh summit and hovers around 60% until the present. Though these trends are clearly visible, because I only have seven and eight data points respectively for each graph, the exact years in which attitudes change appear somewhat skewed.

**Figure 3.4 Israeli Worry and Evaluation of Arab Aspirations**

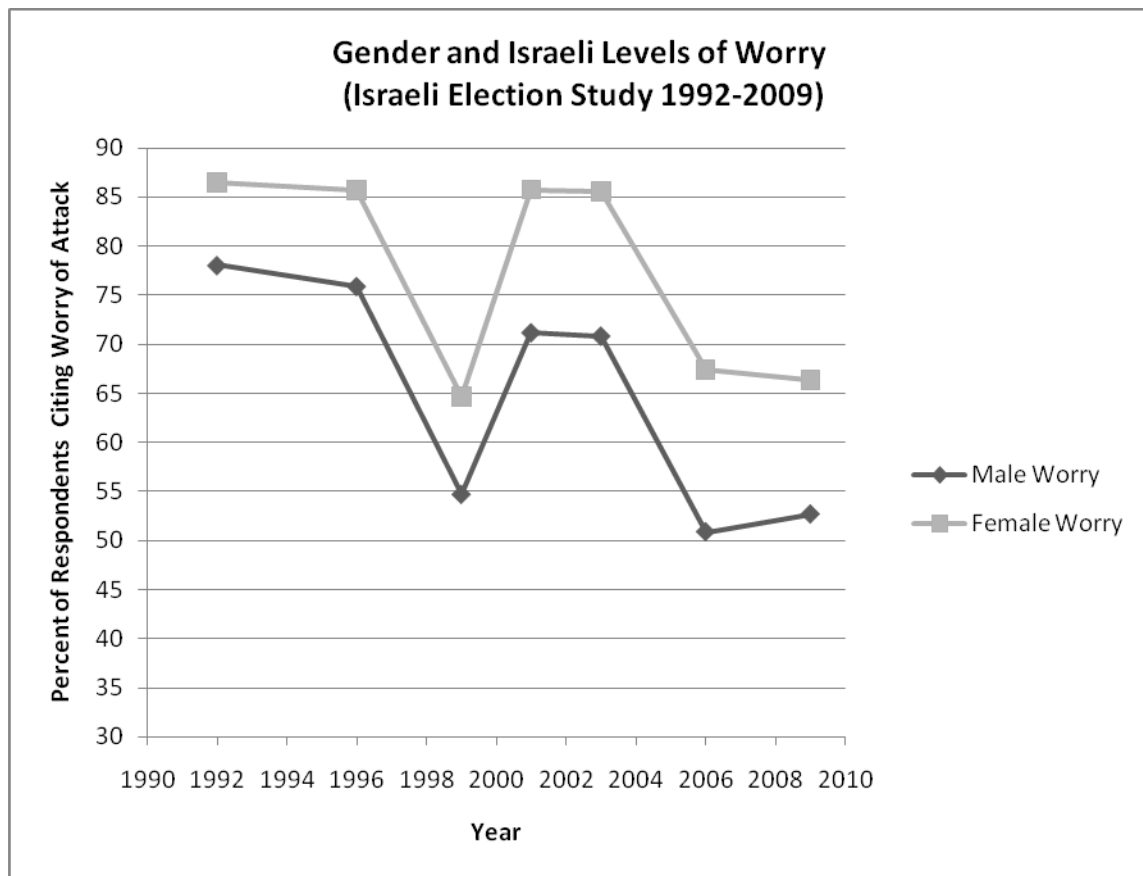




After examining the level of worriedness and Arab aspirations over time, I compared the percentages of women who expressed worry of Arab attack to the percentages of men for each year (Figure 3.5). As I hypothesized, women were clearly more likely than men to express worry by at least ten percentage points each year, and in 2000 women expressed more worry than men by about fifteen percentage points.<sup>40</sup>

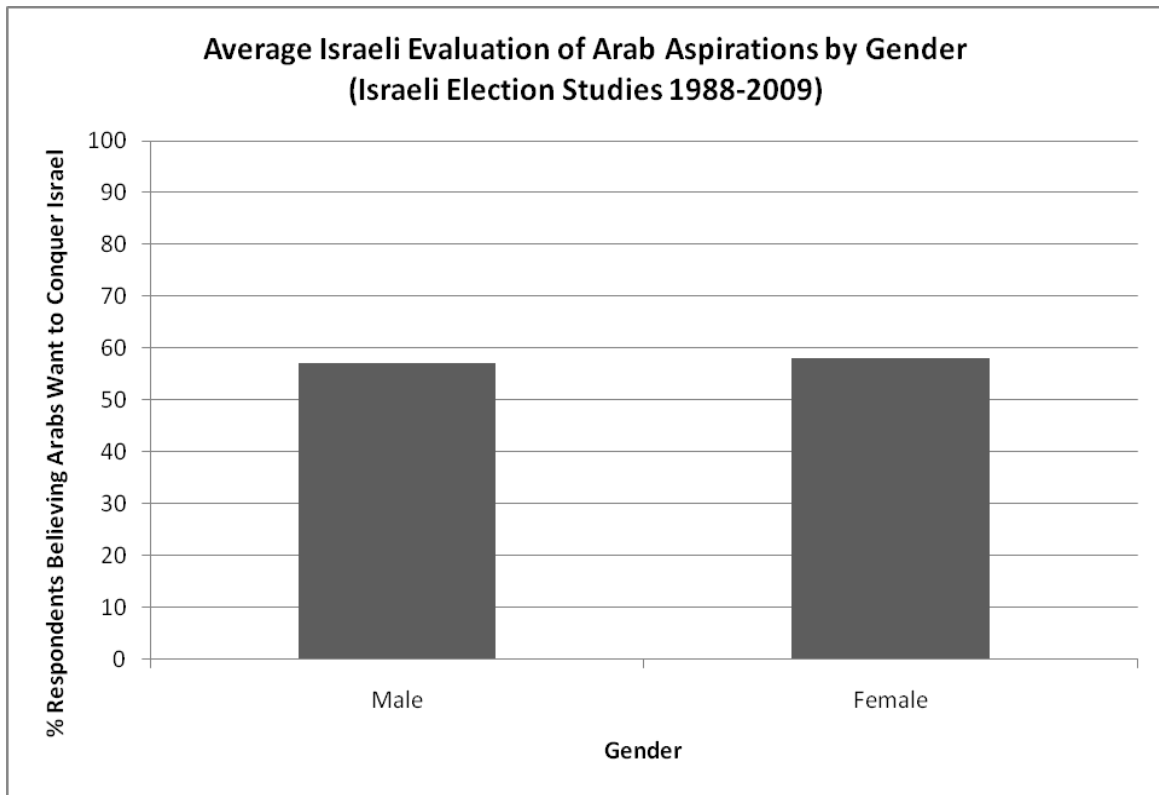
**Figure 3.5**

<sup>40</sup> All of the gender differences in Figure 3.1 are statistically significant at the .001 level.



Interestingly, the gender differences evident in levels of worry were not apparent in respondents' evaluations of Arab aspirations. There were no statistically significant gender differences for any of the eight years analyzed. As Figure 3.6 demonstrates below, between 1988 and 2009 an average of 57% of men and 58% of women believed that Arabs wished to conquer Israel, indicating a clear absence of a gender gap as the male and female percentages are essentially identical. Although the lack of a gender gap in perception of enemy aspirations runs counter to the literature on gender and empathy that highlights the uniquely female ability to view would be "enemies" or "out groups" more favorably, in this context of protracted threat, these results are unsurprising. As I hypothesized, the high levels of worry and fear reported by Israeli women may overshadow their ability or desire to assess Arab aspirations sympathetically.

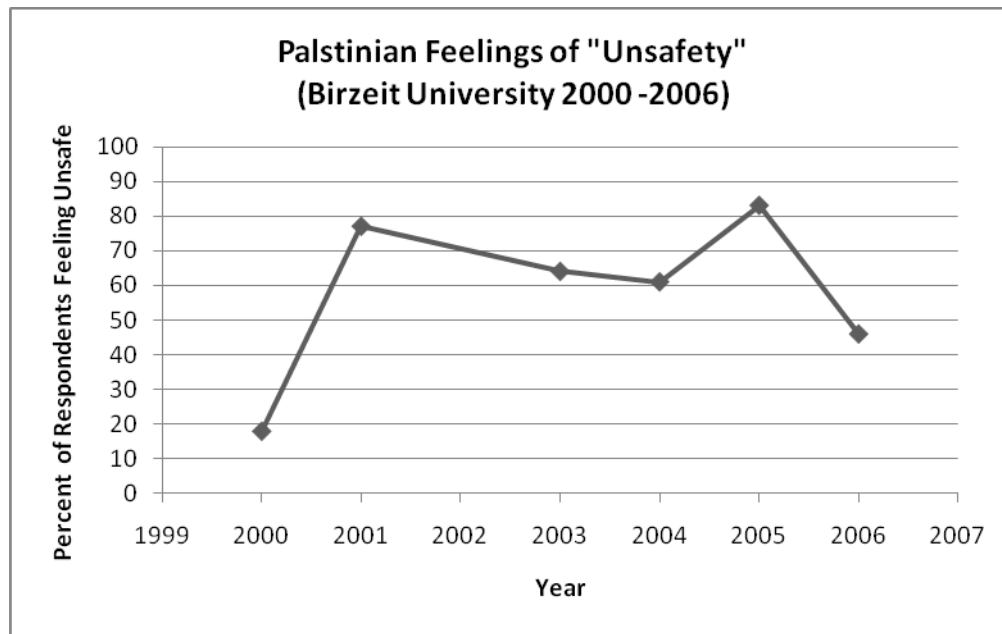
**Figure 3.6**



### **Palestinian Result**

Analysis of data from Birzeit University from 2000 to 2006 demonstrates that like Israelis, Palestinian levels of threat perception respond directly to events on the ground. As Figure 3.7 indicates, Palestinian threat perception spiked dramatically with the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September of 2000. It peaked in 2005 right before the signing of the Sharm al-Sheikh agreement that marked the end of the intifada and then declined.

**Figure 3.7**



Although I was unable to analyze these trends by gender as I did not have access to the complete Birzeit University data set, research conducted by The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) provides important insights into the gendered nature of Palestinian threat perception. In 2009 DCAF conducted 35 focus groups each with 12 women in the West Bank and Gaza strip in 2009 in order to investigate the unique security concerns of Palestinian women from all class, religious, and regional backgrounds. They concluded that Palestinian women are more threatened by violence and consequently report higher levels of worry than men. These sentiments are clearly expressed in the responses of female participants in the focus groups that were documented in 700 pages of transcripts. Examples of responses to the questions: “Are you concerned for your safety?” and “Do you feel secure?” are detailed below:

- *We can't sleep because we don't feel secure inside our homes. (...) My son was killed; my home was demolished while we were sleeping inside. During the night we feel scared and we keep waiting for the morning to come. --- Mother from the Gaza Strip*

- *I was once on a bypass road and there was a settler passing by. There is a risk of being shot, killed or attacked. There are arrests at checkpoints. We are far away from social and economic security.* --- Working Woman, City (Hebron)
- *We saw a school being shelled in Gaza, so how can a mother send her child to school the next day?* --- Working Woman, Camp (Nablu)

After analyzing the results of the data collected in their focus groups DCAF concludes that Palestinian women and girls face unique security concerns that shape their heightened sense of threat and insecurity.<sup>41</sup> While men also express concerns for their security, Palestinian women are uniquely vulnerable members of society and thus demonstrate higher levels of worry of personal injury or insecurity as a result of the Israeli occupation.

## **Other Demographic Correlates of Threat Perception**

### **Israel**

While these Israeli and Palestinian results demonstrate clear gender differences in threat perception, it is important to control for other demographic factors that might impact this gender gap. I therefore investigate whether or not these gender differences are concentrated in any particular population group by examining levels of gender differences by ideological self identification, religiosity, age, and level of education.

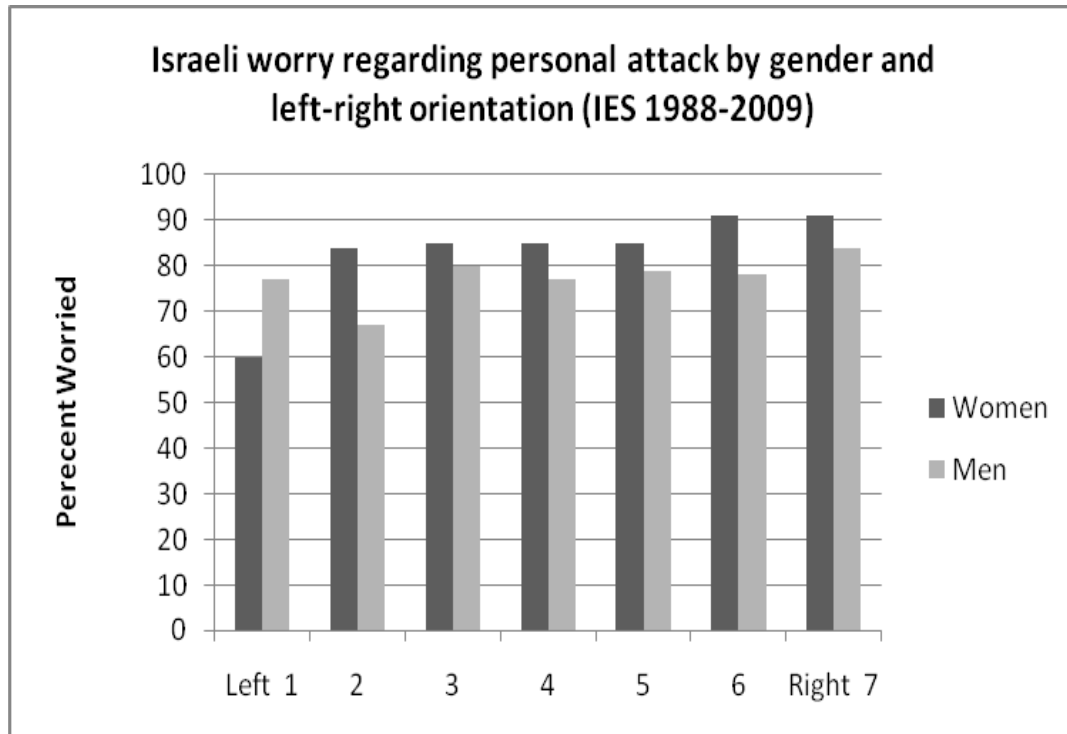
In terms of ideology, although the argument could be made that women may gravitate towards the left or right because of their degree of worry, with dovish women who perceive danger disproportionately choosing the left and hawkish women who perceive danger disproportionately choosing the right, my analysis does not support this hypothesis. As Figure 3.8 elucidates, the gender gap in ideological self identification from extreme left to extreme right is very large for all ideological groups. Furthermore, the degree of this gender gap is very similar

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<sup>41</sup> Chaban, Stephanie et. al. "Palestinian Women and Security." *Geneva Centre for Security Development and the Rule of Law*. 2010.

across the left-right scale with the exception of the far left which represents a very small subsample of the population. That being said, it is important to note that both men and women who identify with the right perceive higher levels of threat than those on the left.

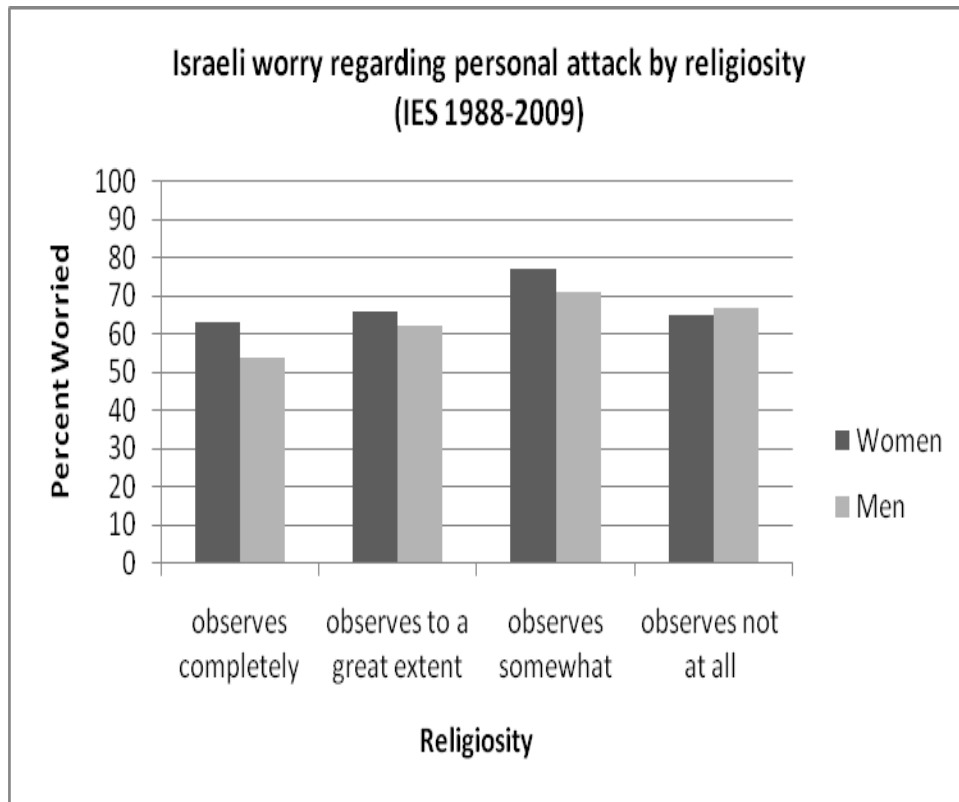
**Figure 3.8**



Regarding religiosity, as Figure 3.9 demonstrates, the gender gap is similar regardless of respondents' level of observance. Furthermore, there seems to be little correlation between religiosity and level of worry, as the very observant and those who are not at all observant express similar levels of threat perception. Interestingly, those who classify themselves as "somewhat observant" report higher levels of worry. Perhaps those who are agnostic or not fully committed to either religion or secularism may feel more vulnerable as they do not feel guided by a clear belief system or worldview.

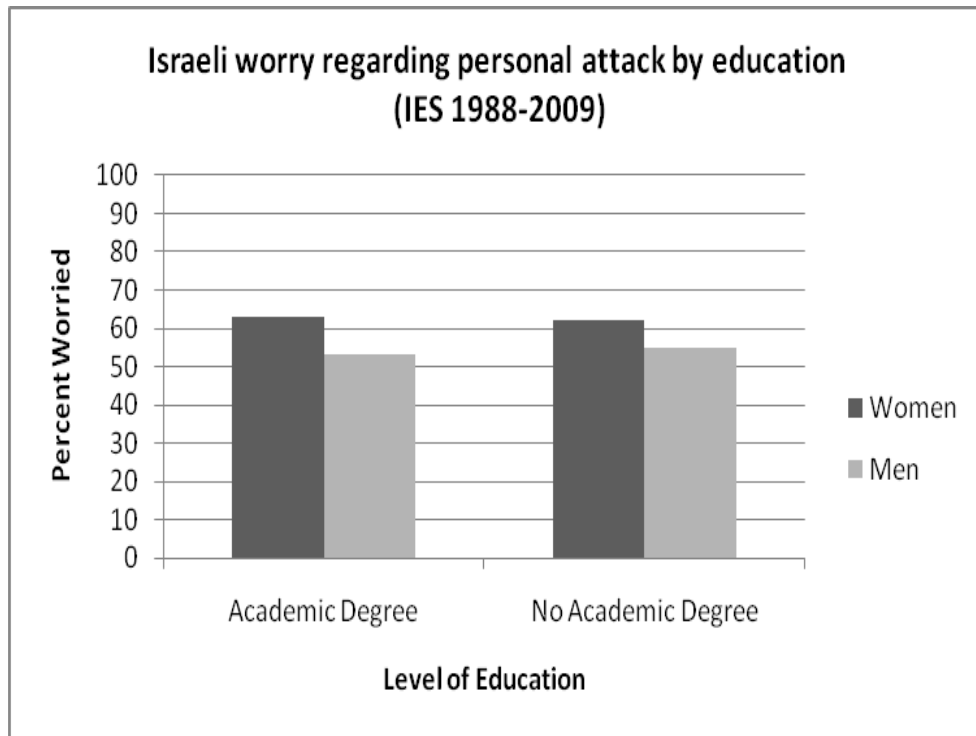


**Figure 3.9**



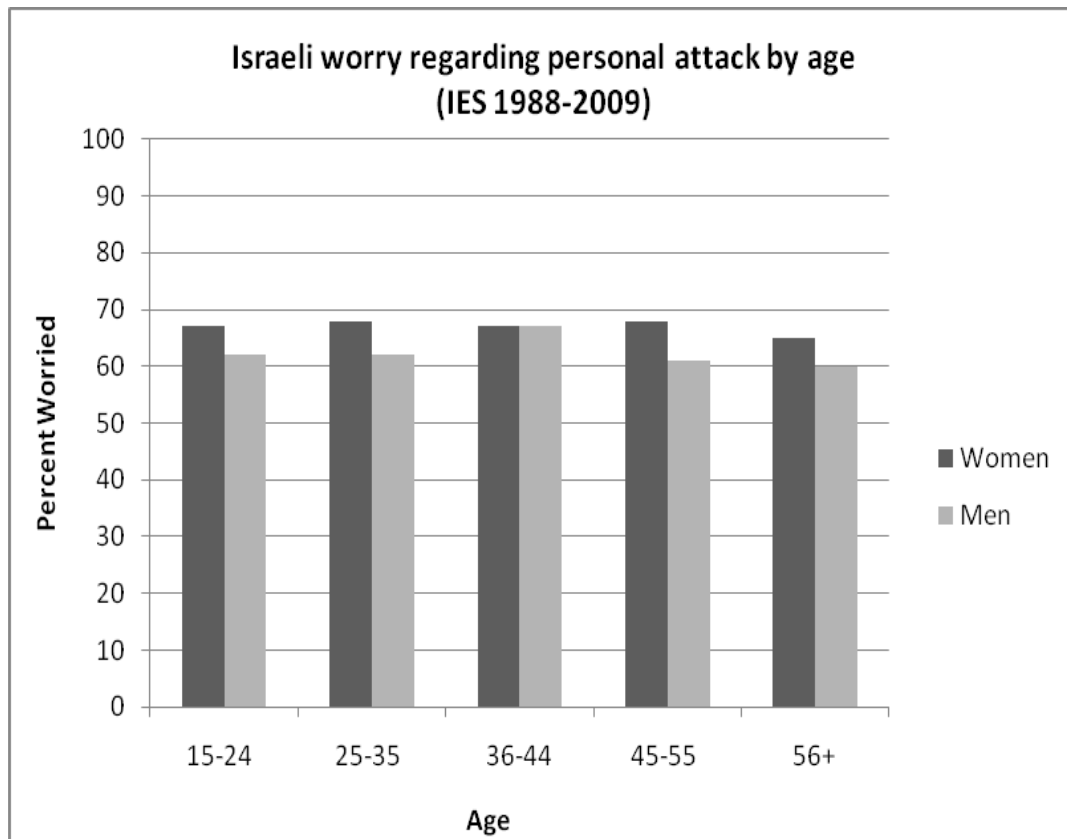
In terms of education, the gender gap is greater among respondents without an academic degree. As Figure 3.10 indicates, while a gender gap exists among those with an academic degree as well, it is significantly larger among less educated respondents. Furthermore, those without an academic degree express slightly higher levels of worry than more educated respondents. More educated respondents generally reflect more dovish attitudes and this may be partly due to their lower levels of worry.

**Figure 3.10**



Finally, regarding age as Figure 3.11 elucidates, the gender gap in worry is somewhat greater for middle aged and older respondents over the age of 45. Overall, there is little relationship between age and threat perception. That being said, respondents over 56 report slightly lower levels of worry than younger respondents.

**Figure 3.11**



In aggregate, this analysis of the gender differences in threat perception by other demographic factors indicates that while the gender gap is somewhat higher among less educated and older respondents, in general gender differences are not concentrated within any particular subset of the Israeli population. With a few minor exceptions, gender differences exist across most levels of age, education, religion, and ideology in Israel.

### **Palestine**

Because I did not have access to a complete data set for assessing Palestinian threat perception, I am unable to conduct the detailed level of analysis that I provided on the Israeli side. That being said, a 2006 DCAF report includes useful cross tabulations of Palestinian feelings of insecurity by a variety of demographic factors. In terms of age, in contrast to the Israeli data, older Palestinian respondents report higher levels of threat perception than younger

respondents with 49% of those between 18-24 years of age feel insecure compared with 65% of those aged 50 and over. However, as is true on the Israeli side, those respondents with lower levels of education report higher levels of threat perception as 53% of Palestinians with a high educational level feel insecure compared with 60% with a low educational level. Finally, poorer respondents feel less secure than those who are better off economically.<sup>42</sup>

## **Conclusion and Implications**

The gender differences in Israeli and Palestinian threat perception demonstrated above may have important implications for attitudes towards the peace process and support for violence and the use of force. As outlined in Chapter 2, although women in other international contexts have higher levels of threat perception or worry than men, they generally are less supportive of punitive actions against criminals, terrorists, or other “enemy” groups. That being said, the particularly high levels of threat perception in the Israeli-Palestinian context may temper this gender gap. For example, as Rouhana and Fiske write in their analysis of asymmetric intergroup conflict, “Consistently linked with support for aggressive and belligerent retaliatory policies against out-groups is perception of collective threat i.e., perception of realistic threat to one’s own group or state posed by another group or state.”<sup>43</sup> They document a variety of studies that have shown that levels of threat increase political intolerance and support for punitive and aggressive actions against the “out-group.” They argue that the Israeli perception of a collective threat from Palestinian terrorist attacks feeds into support of harsh, hard-line policies.<sup>44</sup>

Threat has also been shown to play an important role in shaping Palestinian public opinion on these issues. For example, increased support for violence and the Islamist parties is

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<sup>42</sup> Bocco, Riccardo, and Luigi De Martino, Roland Friedrich, Jalal Al Hussein, Arnold Luethold “Politics, Security and the Barrier: Palestinian Public Perceptions.” IUED, DCAF 2006

<sup>43</sup> Rouhana, Nadim and Susan T. Fiske “Perception of Power, Threat, and Conflict Intensity in Asymmetric Intergroup Conflict : Arab and Jewish Citizens of Israel” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 1995 39: 49

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

correlated with heightened threat perception.<sup>45</sup> As Khalil Shikaki writes in his 2009 study of Palestinian public opinion, “Public demand for violence is not stable; it responds to threat perception, to the level of pain and suffering imposed by the policies and actions of Israel.” He goes on to conclude that “Positive stimuli that take measures to end the Israeli occupation produce greater rejection of violence, while steps that seek to inflict punishment increase support for violence.”<sup>46</sup>

In this way, trends in Israeli and Palestinian threat perception are vital to understanding trends in other policy attitudes. It is therefore important to note the gender differences that have emerged in Israeli and Palestinian threat perception when analyzing gender differences in support for the peace process and support for the use of violence and force in the following chapters.

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<sup>45</sup>Shikaki, Khalil. *Willingness to Compromise: Palestinian Public Opinion and the Peace Process*. Diane Publishing. 2009, 6.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Chapter 4**

### **Testing the “Women and Peace Hypothesis” in Israel and Palestine**

As Chapter 2 demonstrates, while a growing body of literature has found women to be more “peaceful,” or supportive of diplomatic means of conflict resolution than men, studies conducted in the Israeli-Palestinian context have been at odds with this conventional wisdom. Although this discrepancy has been attributed to a variety of factors including the protracted and violent nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it warrants further investigation. In this chapter I will test the women and peace hypothesis using Israeli and Palestinian survey data in order to provide further evidence on the relationship between gender and attitudes towards the peace process.

To contextualize my own research, I will first give a brief historical overview of key events in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Next I will outline major trends in Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards negotiations and peace. I will then present my hypothesis, methodology, and the results of my analysis of gender differences in Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards the peace process.

#### **Historical Overview and Salient Issues in the Peace Process**

The term “peace process” dates back to the mid 1970’s and initially referred to American led efforts to bring about a negotiated peace between Israel and the surrounding Arab states. Over the past three decades, it has evolved into what William Quandt describes as “the gradual, step-by-step approach to resolving one of the world’s most difficult conflicts.”<sup>1</sup> In the aftermath of the 1967 War, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 242. This resolution proposed a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and was accepted by Israel, Jordan, and

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<sup>1</sup> Quandt, William. *Peace process: American diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1967*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution and University of California Press.

Egypt. In 1970, American Secretary of State William Rogers proposed the Rogers Plan, which called for a ceasefire between Israel and the Arab states in an effort to reach an agreement within the framework of UN Resolution 242. While the Egyptian government accepted the agreement, Israel refused to participate in negotiations under the parameters set forth in the Rogers Plan.<sup>2</sup> The peace process resumed in the aftermath of the First Gulf War when President George H.W. Bush called the Madrid Peace Conference between Israel and the surrounding Arab nations. Although talks continued in Washington, D.C., they bore little fruit.<sup>3</sup>

Direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians began in 1993 with the advent of the Oslo Accords. These negotiations are most relevant to my investigation of attitudes towards war and peace, as they have played an important role in shaping Israeli and Palestinian public opinion. In 1993, Israeli officials led by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leaders led by Yasser Arafat put forth a concerted effort to find a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In that same year Arafat wrote a letter recognizing Israel's right to exist, and a few months later the Oslo Accords produced a framework for future peaceful relations. Under the stipulations put forth in the Oslo agreement, Israel would cede control of the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 in exchange for peace and security guarantees.

Despite intermittent progress throughout the negotiations, which culminated in a Nobel Peace Prize for Rabin and Arafat in 1994, the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister in 1995 dealt a devastating blow to the peace process.<sup>4</sup> Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barack's failure to reach an agreement at Camp David in 2000 marked the death knell of the Oslo Accords and the outbreak of the Second Intifada. A few months later, Bill Clinton appointed Senator George

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<sup>2</sup> Pappe, I. *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Eran, Oded. "Arab-Israel Peacemaking." *The Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East*. Ed. Abraham Sela. New York: Continuum, 2002

<sup>4</sup> Watson, Geoffrey R. *The Oslo Accords: International Law and the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Agreements*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.

Mitchell to lead a fact finding committee that ultimately published a report designed to revive the peace process.<sup>5</sup>

In January of 2001 in Taba, Egypt, the Israeli negotiation team proposed a peace plan that would remove Israeli troops from certain controlled areas of the Palestinian territories. Although Palestinian negotiators accepted this plan as a starting point for further negotiations, at the Taba Summit, the talks ended without agreement.<sup>6</sup> In 2002 the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and Russia proposed the Road Map for Peace. This plan called for a freeze of Israeli settlement construction and an end to Israeli and Palestinian violence. None of these aims were achieved, however, and the peace process stalled again.<sup>7</sup>

Later that year, Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia proposed the Arab Peace Initiative at the Beirut Summit. The initiative was designed to foster a peaceful solution both to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict specifically. The plan included the drawing of permanent borders based on the UN borders established before the 1967 War. The exchange called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied territories including the Golan Heights. The initiative also proposed Israeli recognition of an independent Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank with Jerusalem as its capitol, and a just solution for Palestinian refugees. In exchange for these Israeli concessions, Arab states offered a complete normalization of Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian relations. Israel expressed security concerns and felt that the concessions were not worth the gains, so negotiations were put on hold.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Seliktar, Ofira. *Doomed to Failure?: the Politics and Intelligence of the Oslo Peace Process*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Hulme, Derick L. *The Israeli-Palestinian Road Map for Peace: a Critical Analysis*. Lanham, MD: University of America, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Podeh, Elie. "The Arab Peace Initiative." *Jerusalem: Palestine-Israel Journal*, 2007.



In 2007, at a peace conference held in Annapolis, a two state solution was articulated for the first time within a mutually agreed upon framework for brokering Israeli-Palestinian peace. From this point forward, the two state solution has been the primary aim of peace negotiations. In 2008, in the midst of increased violence in Gaza, Egypt brokered a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas that required Hamas to end mortar and rocket attacks into Israel as well as to stop its military buildup. When this agreement collapsed in December of 2008, the Israel-Gaza war erupted, resulting in high numbers of Palestinian civilian casualties.<sup>9</sup> In September of 2010, the Obama administration attempted to revive the floundering peace process. The aim of these talks was to bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to an official end through the establishment of a two state solution, halt to further land claims, and to establish a rejection of violence by both sides. Once again the process stalled due to disputes over the freezing of Israeli settlement construction and security concerns.<sup>10</sup>

As the rocky course of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations indicates, forging a lasting peace in the midst of protracted violence has not been easy. Although Israeli and Palestinian opinions of the conditions for peace vary, certain key issues have remained sticking points in negotiations. For Palestinians, the conflict dates back to the 1948 creation of Israel, and a successful resolution will require the return of refugees, the formation of a Palestinian state, and some degree of control over Jerusalem. For Israelis, security concerns have remained paramount, and many have felt that extensive Palestinian demands are not sufficiently backed up by promises to halt violence. On both sides, disputes over mutual recognition, borders, security, water rights, control of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, Palestinian freedom of movement and the

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<sup>9</sup> Hulme, *The Israeli-Palestinian Road Map for Peace: a Critical Analysis*.

<sup>10</sup> "Israeli-Palestinian Peace Talks Must Be Inclusive". Brookings Institution, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011. <[http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2010/0929\\_middle\\_east\\_peace\\_sayre.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2010/0929_middle_east_peace_sayre.aspx)>.

rights of Palestinian refugees have been key points of contention that have catalyzed many roadblocks in the peace process.

### **Evolution of Israeli and Palestinian Support for Peace Negotiations**

Before examining the gendered nature of support for the peace process, it is important to describe trends in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion on the peace process since the First Intifada. For both Israelis and Palestinians, attitudes towards the peace process are grounded in changing events on the ground and relate directly to the historical course of the peace process and the contentious issues outlined above. As Chapter 3 demonstrates, high levels of threat perception have often caused attitudes towards the peace process to harden, whereas periods of relative calm have made Israelis and Palestinians more receptive to negotiations.

### **Israeli Support for Peace Negotiations**

In their 2009 study “What Causes Changes in Opinion about the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process?” David Fielding and Madeline Penny found a stable relationship between the fraction of Israeli respondents supporting the peace process and variables capturing the current level of conflict intensity.”<sup>11</sup> Their data analysis indicates that variations in the number of Israeli and Palestinian casualties, as well as the perceived economic costs of conflict, directly impacts support for peace negotiations. Interestingly, they note that fatalities of Israeli military personnel weaken support for peace negotiations, while fatalities of Jewish Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza strip strengthen support for negotiations. They argue that this indicates increasing Israeli recognition that the settlements are an obstacle to the peace process. They further report that increases in

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<sup>11</sup> Fielding, David and Madeline Penny. “What Causes Changes in Opinion About the Israeli--Palestinian Peace Process?” *Journal of Peace Research* 2009 46: 99

casualties among Palestinian children cause higher Israeli support for the peace process, whereas an increase in adult Palestinian casualties had little impact.<sup>12</sup>

Similar findings are evident in data collected by the Israeli Election Studies and the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies. The outbreak of the First Intifada presented Israelis with a unique paradox. While they did not want to sit idly by and refuse to negotiate with Palestinians, they were also reluctant to make concessions in the face of Palestinian violence. During this period, Israeli public opinion moderated and there was increased support for territorial concessions, the establishment of a Palestinian state and negotiations with the PLO.<sup>13</sup> In 1993, following the start of the Oslo Accords, Israelis believed peace was more plausible than they had at any point since the Gulf War. Furthermore, support for territorial concessions and the establishment of a Palestinian state continued.<sup>14</sup> In 1994 optimism towards the Oslo Accords was down slightly, but support for negotiations with the PLO remained high.<sup>15</sup> By 1995 as hopes for peace waned somewhat, the majority of Israelis opposed negotiations with the PLO, opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state, and were reluctant to make territorial concessions. In this period a majority of Israelis supported military rather than diplomatic means of combating terrorism.<sup>16</sup> As figure 4.1 indicates, in 1996, after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, there was a growing acceptance of the peace process and attitudes towards territorial concessions and the establishment of a Palestinian state became more conciliatory.<sup>17</sup> By 1997 support for the peace process was again on the rise with 89% of

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> INSS 1989

<sup>14</sup> INSS 1993

<sup>15</sup> INSS 1994

<sup>16</sup> INSS 1995

<sup>17</sup> INSS 1996

Israelis supporting negotiations with the PLO compared to a level of 60% in 1994.<sup>18</sup> In 1998 many Israelis had become disillusioned with the peace process. Although a majority still supported negotiations with the PLO, support for territorial concessions or the establishment of a Palestinian State had fallen. In 1999 conciliatory attitudes rose again and 70% of Israelis favored pursuing negotiations rather than military options.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 4.1**

**Israeli Support for Peace Negotiations (INSS 1994-2001)**

<b>% Support for Peace Negotiations</b>	<b>Year</b>
60%	1994
89%	1997
65%	1998
70%	1999
58%	2001

As Figure 4.1 indicates, in 2001 following the outbreak of the Second Intifada, high levels of violence prompted increased pessimism regarding the peace process. However, even after months of violence, 58% of Israelis still expressed support for the continuation of the peace process. Despite this, when asked whether pursuing peace negotiations or military options would be more effective, the majority of Israelis supported military means.<sup>20</sup> By 2002 Israelis had adopted less conciliatory postures on almost all issues in the peace process.<sup>21</sup> Israelis in 2003 were more optimistic regarding prospects for peace and supportive of the measures required to move the peace process forward compared to the respondents of the 2002 survey.<sup>22</sup> Between 2005 and 2007, Israelis grew more dovish on political

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<sup>18</sup> INSS 1997

<sup>19</sup> INSS 1999

<sup>20</sup> INSS 2001

<sup>21</sup> INSS 2002

<sup>22</sup> INSS 2003

issues, demonstrating a readiness for territorial compromise and concessions in the context of a permanent settlement and an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They remained committed to negotiating a solution to the conflict, though many doubted Palestinian commitment to the peace process.<sup>23</sup> Continuing this trend, in 2008 and 2009 an overwhelming majority of the Israeli public rejected the idea of halting the peace process, even though respondents felt little optimism about prospects for reaching an agreement.<sup>24</sup> In this way, Israeli attitudes towards the peace process fluctuated based on levels of violence and the successes or failures of various peace negotiations.

### **Palestinian Support for Peace Negotiations**

Ever since the first surveys of Palestinian attitudes towards the peace process were conducted in 1993, Palestinians have generally been very supportive of negotiations. Surveys conducted by the Center for Palestine Research and Studies (CPRS) in Nablus have shown consistent support for the continuation of the peace process. As Figure 4.2 demonstrates, in 1994, although there was widespread disappointment among Palestinians due to the Israeli failure to keep deadlines, a majority nonetheless supported peace negotiations. Support increased to over 65% in March and May 1995, when progress in the negotiations created a measured degree of optimism. In an August-September 1995 poll, support for the peace process reached 71%.

As Figure 4.2 indicates, support for the specific agreements has been less stable, fluctuating in response to major events and the success of negotiations.<sup>25</sup> In 1996 78% of Palestinian supported the continuation of peace negotiations. In 1997 and 1998 the number had fallen slightly with the stalling of the Oslo Accords. By 1999, when the process had all but

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<sup>23</sup> INSS 2005-2007

<sup>24</sup> INSS 2004-2009

<sup>25</sup> Shikaki, Khalil. "The Peace Process, National Reconstruction, and the Transition to Democracy in Palestine." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25.2 (1996): 5-20.

halted, support for continued negotiations had fallen to 67%.<sup>26</sup> With the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2001, 58% of Palestinians supported resuming negotiations, despite increased levels of violence.<sup>27</sup> However, by 2002, there was a sharp divide in the Palestinian population over support for a ceasefire and resuming negotiations. In 2003, a majority of Palestinians supported the Roadmap for Peace and a majority supported a ceasefire and ending the armed Intifada. In 2004 support for peace negotiations remained high, and a majority demanded a mutual commitment to end violence between Israelis and Palestinians. In 2005 and 2006 levels of pessimism increased and Palestinian support for peace negotiations dropped somewhat. By 2007 there was a noteworthy lack of faith in the ability of the Annapolis peace process to bring lasting peace. Pessimism remained prominent in 2008 and 2009. In 2010, despite initial support for peace negotiations, a majority of Palestinians opposed resuming negotiations until Israel agreed to a settlement freeze.<sup>28</sup> Again, this trajectory demonstrates that, like Israeli attitudes, Palestinian support for the peace process is strongly influenced by current events and the perceived success of ongoing peace negotiations.

**Figure 4.2**

**Support for Peace Negotiations (PSR 1994-2007)**

<b>% Support for Peace Negotiations</b>	<b>Year</b>
65%	1994
71%	1995
78%	1996
67%	1999
58%	2001
66%	2003
69%	2004
59%	2005
47%	2007

<sup>26</sup> PSR 1996-1999

<sup>27</sup> PSR 2001

<sup>28</sup> PSR 2005-2010

## **Hypothesis and Methodology**

Although past studies of the gender gap in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion have not found significant differences in attitudes towards the peace process, I nonetheless hypothesize that both Israeli and Palestinian women will be more likely to favor diplomatic negotiations than men. This hypothesis is grounded in the large body of literature supporting the women and peace hypothesis, which may still apply in the Israeli-Palestinian context.

I will test this hypothesis using Israeli survey data from the Israeli Election Studies from 1988 to 2009 and Palestinian survey data from the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) from 1996 to 1999. Because I only have direct access to a limited number of polls, I will supplement my own findings with analysis of gender differences carried out by the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies, Craig Charney's cross tabulations in his study entitled "Empowering Israeli Women: The Gender Gap, Women's Issues, and The Vote," and cross tabulations of Palestinian survey data from the Jerusalem Center for Media and Communication Studies and the Center for Development Studies at Birzeit University.

## **Israeli Results**

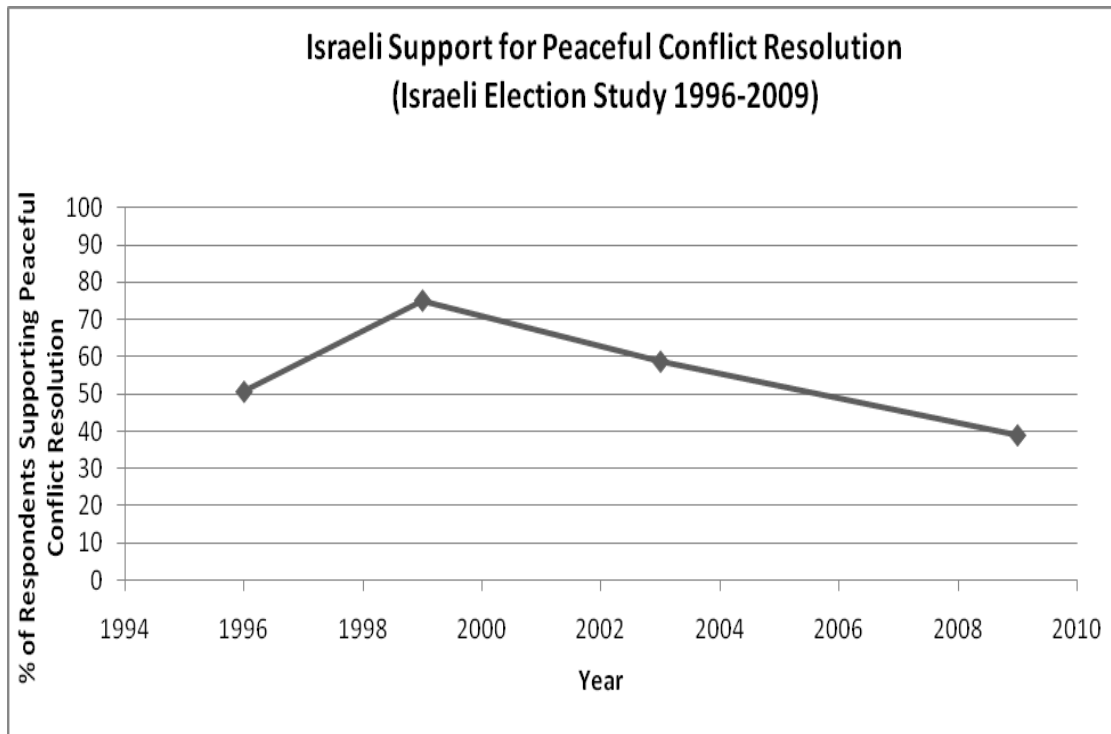
Because I had access to the entire data set of the Israeli Election Study, I chose to analyze a number of different survey questions that might measure support for the peace process. The first question asked respondents, "*What do you think Israel should concentrate on in order to avoid war?*" The choices that were presented were "the peace process" or "increasing military strength." This question was asked in 1996, 1998, 2003, and 2009. As Figure 4.3 demonstrates, support for peaceful means of conflict resolution was on the rise in the late 1990's but dropped

off sharply following the outbreak of the Second Intifada, never fully recovering. This probably relates to the findings outlined above that Israelis lost confidence in the ability to negotiate with the Palestinians throughout the 2000's, despite continued support for the peace process generally. However, it is important to note that this graph does not include the intervening data points in Figure 4.1.

Although there were no consistently statistically significant gender differences, as the bar graph below indicates, women on average were somewhat more likely to support peaceful rather than military means of avoiding war. In the four years that the question was asked, 58% of women supported using the peace process to avoid war compared with 54% of men. Furthermore, in 2009, 42% of women supported peaceful means of conflict resolution compared to 35% of men. In 1999 77% of women supported peaceful means compared to 73% of men, and in 1996 53% of women supported peaceful means compared to 47% of men. While these results are not statistically significant, they still perhaps indicate somewhat more “peaceful” attitudes of women and warrant further investigation using additional data.



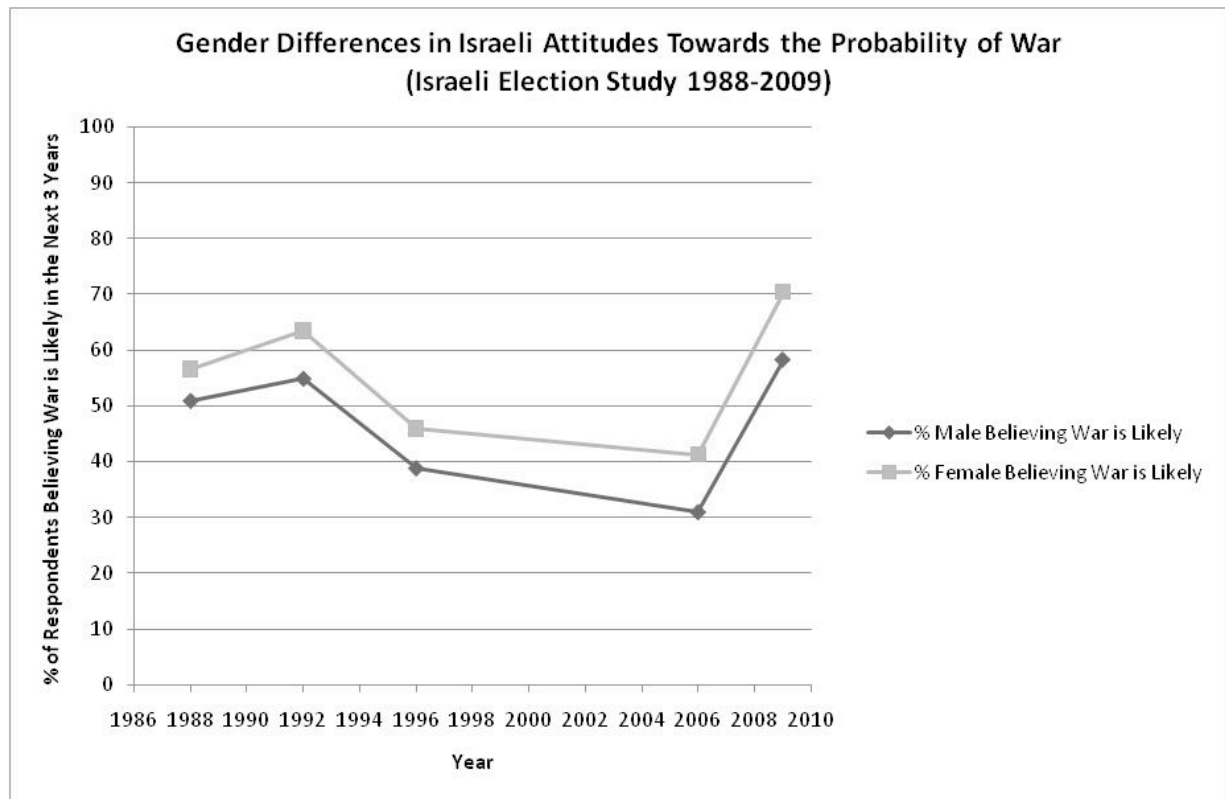
**Figure 4.3**





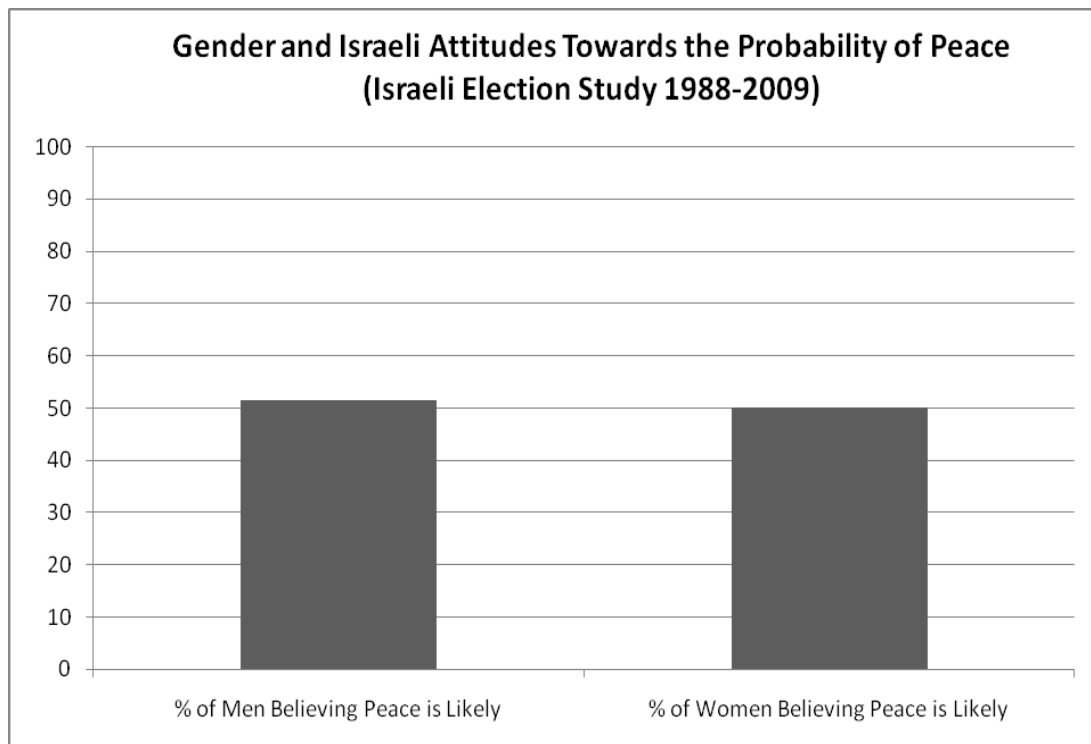
In order to link attitudes towards war and peace to the discussion of threat perception in Chapter 3, I also analyzed a question which asked respondents “How likely do you think it is that war will break out in the next 3 years?” and “How likely do you think it is that peace will be achieved in the next 3 years?” These questions were each asked 5 times in the Israeli Election Study between 1988 and 2009. As Figure 4.4 indicates, women consistently predicted that war would break out at higher rates than men. The gender gap ranged from 6 percentage points in 1988 to almost 12 percentage points in 2009, with statistically significant results in every year except 1988. The graph below clearly demonstrates this gender gap. These findings relate to threat perception as the perceived likelihood of war is most likely grounded in fear of attack and personal feelings of insecurity.

**Figure 4.4**



Interestingly, as Figure 4.5 indicates, a similar gender gap was not evident in responses to the question “How likely do you think it is that that there will be peace in the next 3 years?” An average of 51% of men predicted there would be peace compared with 50% of women. This may be due to women’s high levels of perceived threat and belief in the likelihood of war. These attitudes could cause women to be pessimistic about prospects for peace, although they may still support the peace process at slightly higher rates than men.

**Figure 4.5**



In addition to my analysis of gender differences in attitudes towards the peace process, the Israeli Institute of National Security Studies has done cross tabulations by gender on a variety of survey questions that provide further insight. The results of their 1989 surveys indicated that men opposed negotiations with the PLO at a higher rate than women.<sup>29</sup> In 1993 the INSS found that women had more faith in the ability of peace talks to stop Palestinian terrorism, with 48% of women holding this belief compared with 43% of men. Similarly, men were more opposed to resuming negotiations if terrorist attacks continued than women.<sup>30</sup> In 1996, women were less likely to feel that the Oslo peace process had harmed Israeli security than men, with 12% of women holding the view that it had been very harmful compared to 17% of men.<sup>31</sup> In 2000 the INSS reported that women were significantly more likely than men to support a peace agreement

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<sup>29</sup> INSS 1989

<sup>30</sup> INSS 1995

<sup>31</sup> INSS 1996

that would allow for withdrawal from Lebanon.<sup>32</sup> In the aftermath of the outbreak of the Second Intifada, men once again opposed peace agreements at a higher rate than women.<sup>33</sup> The 2003 INSS study included a summary of the breakdown of support for peace agreements by gender from 1994 to 2003. It indicates that while in 1994 there was no difference in male and female support for the peace process, in 1999 women were much more likely to feel that signed agreements would mean an end to the conflict. Furthermore, between 1999 and 2003, female opinions changed radically by 39% compared to a 24 % difference for men. This indicates that women became dramatically less supportive of peace agreements following the outbreak of the Second Intifada relative to men. This sharp change in female attitudes may relate to high levels of threat perception that emerged alongside increased levels of violence.<sup>34</sup> Overall, these INSS surveys indicate that there are numerous slight gender differences that are only occasionally significant. However, these differences, whether large or small, consistently point toward slightly more favorable attitudes on part of women toward peace process.

Another important aspect of gender differences on support of the peace process is the demographic breakdown of the gender gap. In Craig Charney's 1998 study of female public opinion in Israel, he found that the largest gender gaps in support for the peace process existed among Israelis between the ages of 36 and 64, Secular Jews and Conservative Religious Jews who were all more favorable toward Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank than men of their same demographic groups.<sup>35</sup> He also found that female favorable attitudes towards the peace process were driven by fear that their relatives could be injured in the territories if the peace process stalled. His data indicated that women were almost twice as likely as men to cite concern

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<sup>32</sup> INSS 2000

<sup>33</sup> INSS 2002

<sup>34</sup> INSS 2003

<sup>35</sup> Charney, Craig. *Women's Empowerment*. Israel Women's Network. Jerusalem: 1998. 25

that their relatives could be injured in the territories as a reason to criticize Netanyahu's handling of the peace process. This is yet another example of how the gender gap on threat perception impacts women's attitudes towards the peace process. Although I did not have access to survey questions that allowed me to analyze the rationale for female support of the peace process, Charney's results are telling, and survey data of this nature deserves further analysis.

### **Gender, Threat and Support for the Peace Process in Israel**

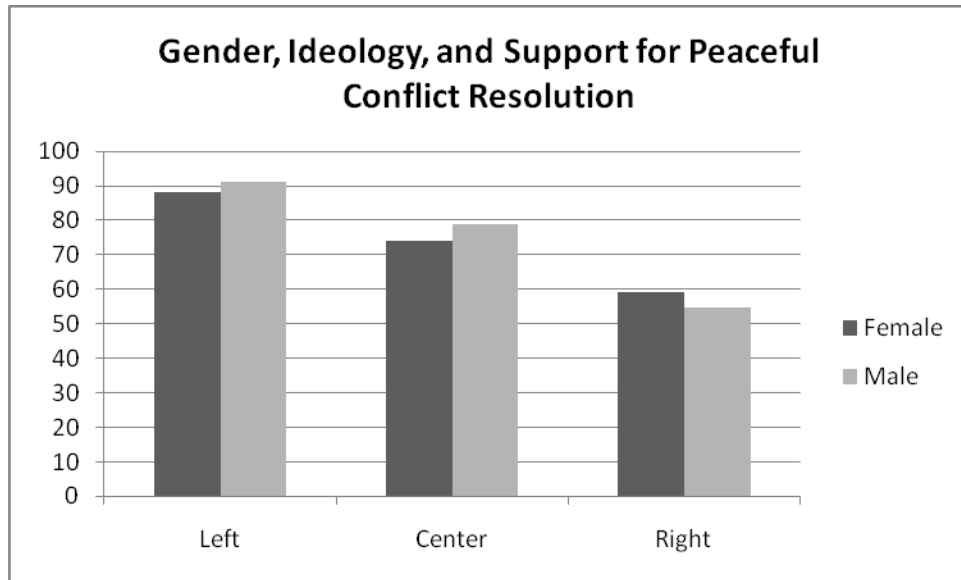
In order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between gender, threat perception and support for the peace process, I analyzed the relationship between respondents' level of worry and their support for peaceful means of conflict resolution. As Figure 4.6 demonstrates, the higher the level of worry reported by respondents, the lower their support for the peace process. Those respondents who identify as "very worried" support peaceful means of conflict resolution at a significantly lower rate than those who identify as "not worried." Furthermore, the lower the level of the worry reported by respondents, the higher the gender gap in male and female support for the peace process. These findings demonstrate that female attitudes towards the peace process are especially impacted by threat perception. This relationship indicates that while the overall gender gap in support for peaceful means of conflict resolution is lower in Israel than in other international contexts, this is likely attributable to high levels of female worry in the midst of a protracted, violent conflict.

**Figure 4.6**



While threat perception clearly plays an important role in conditioning the gender differences in attitudes towards the peace process, political ideology is also an important determinant. As Figure 4.7 demonstrates, those on the right are significantly less likely to support peaceful means of conflict resolution than those on the left. While gender differences within these ideological categories are present, they are modest. Gender therefore plays a smaller role in shaping attitudes towards the peace process than political ideology.

**Figure 4.7**

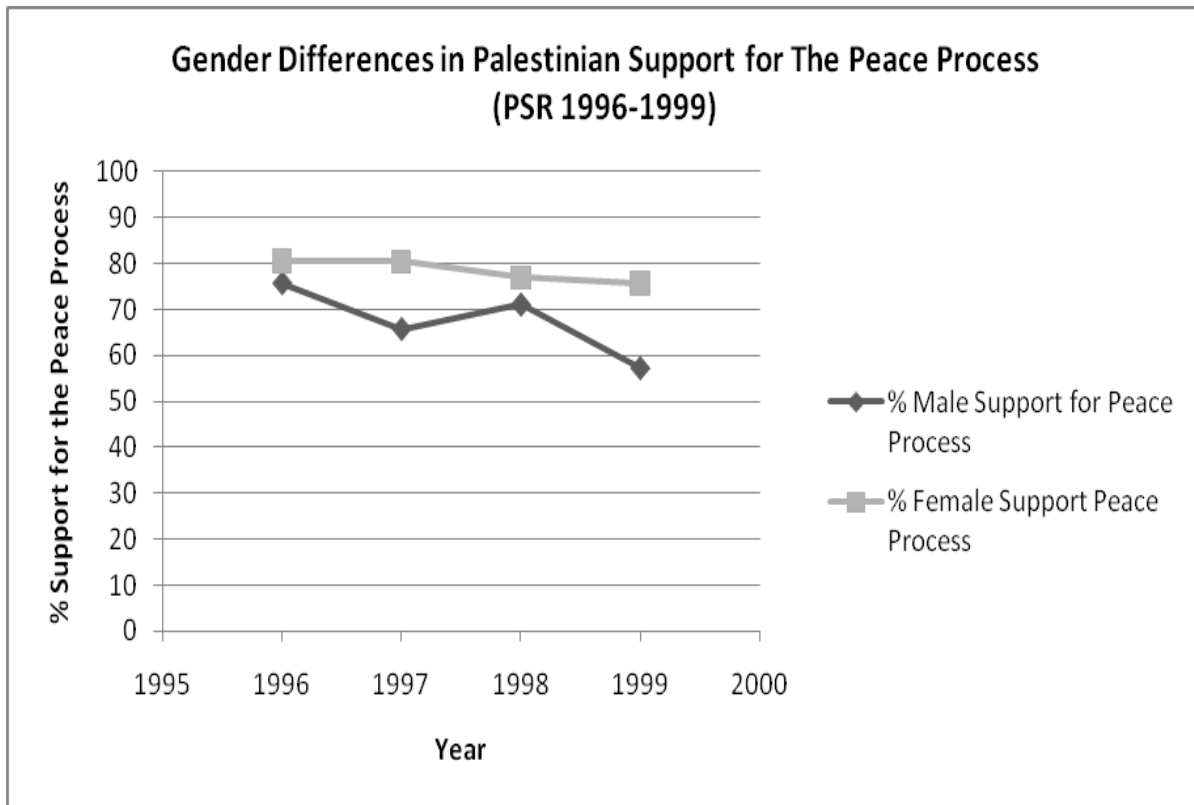


### **Palestinian Results**

On the Palestinian side, I found a statistically significant gender gap, with Palestinian women consistently supporting the peace process at a higher rate than Palestinian men. The survey questions that I analyzed from the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) between 1996 and 1999 asked respondents, “*Do you support or oppose the continuation of the peace process between the PLO and Israel?*” The time period of my data analysis is bookended by the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the stalling of the peace process in 1995 and the lead up to the Second Intifada in 2000. In this time period, as Figure 4.8 indicates, support for the peace process declined steadily. The gender gap in this data ranged from about 5 percentage points in 1996 and 1998 to 15 percentage points in 1997 and almost 20 percentage points in 1999. These results indicate a much clearer Palestinian gender gap in support for the peace process than I found in the Israeli context.

**Figure 4.8**





In addition to this analysis of my somewhat limited Palestinian data, Jaeger's 2009 study of Palestinian attitudes using data from the Development Studies Program at Birzeit University also found significant gender gaps on support for the peace process. He found that women "built greater aspirations around the Oslo peace process" and argued that women were more inclined to believe that they would benefit "from the normalization of relations with Israel and the ensuing demilitarization of the Palestinian society."<sup>36</sup> Jaeger also concluded, using survey data from the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center, that women had more moderate and dovish views on all survey questions related to the peace process than men.<sup>37</sup> This therefore provides further support for the results I found from my own analysis of survey data from the Palestinian Center for Survey Research.

<sup>36</sup> Jaeger et al. "The Struggle for Palestinian Hearts and Minds: Violence and Public Opinion in the Second Intifada."26.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

The results of my data analysis indicate that although there may not always be a significant gender gap in Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards the peace process, important gender differences do sometimes exist. Therefore, it is overly simplistic and, in the Palestinian context, simply false, to conclude that the “women and peace” hypothesis does not apply in the Israeli-Palestinian context.

On the Israeli side, although gender gaps are not uniform, there are key gender differences that indicate that Israeli women may be more supportive of the peace process than previously supposed. The analysis of survey data from the Israeli Elections Studies indicates that women are slightly more supportive of peaceful means of conflict resolution than men, especially in particular years. Furthermore, although women and men have similar attitudes towards the likelihood of peace, women feel that the outbreak of war is significantly more likely than men. As detailed above, the INSS data and Charney’s research indicate that there may be more sporadic and hidden gender gaps that must be further investigated. Furthermore my analysis of the relationship between threat perception and support for peaceful means of conflict resolution indicates that any absence or a gender gap is likely attributable to high levels of worry among Israeli women relative to men (Figure 4.4)

From the Palestinian perspective, there is a clear gender gap, with women supporting peace negotiations at a higher rate than men. Furthermore my results are corroborated by Jaeger’s analysis of attitudes towards the peace process by gender. The Palestinian case seems to confirm the women and peace hypothesis most clearly. Women have more to gain from the demilitarization of their society and the cessation of violence, and so they support peace

negotiations at higher levels than men. These results are particularly interesting as they directly contradict Tessler's findings outlined in Chapter 2.

Overall, while the inconsistent nature of the Israeli gender gap warrants further investigation, the presence of some Israeli gender differences in attitudes towards the peace process and a clear gender gap on the Palestinian side indicate that the women and peace hypothesis still has some application in the Israeli-Palestinian context.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Gender, Violence and the Human Cost of War in Israel and Palestine**

As I outlined in Chapter 2, over the past few decades a substantial body of literature has indicated that relative to men, women are especially sensitive to the human and humanitarian costs of war. In line with this finding, when women are made aware of these costs in terms of military casualties or civilian deaths, they are less likely than men to support the use of military force. As Conover and Sapiro describe, “emotionally distressing” aspects of conflict tend to provoke the largest gender gaps. Despite this finding, previous studies of gender and public opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian context have not examined survey questions that explicitly mention the costs of war. In this chapter, I will address this gap in the literature by analyzing survey data that deals with support for the violent use of force and its consequences.

To provide a frame of reference for my own research, I will first outline the types of violence and the use of force employed by Israelis and Palestinians respectively. I will then overview the trajectory of Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards violence and the use of force. Finally, I will present my own hypothesis, methodology, and findings on gender differences in Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards violence, the use of force, and its consequences.

#### **Israeli and Palestinian Cycles of Violence**

Although Israel and Palestine have witnessed periods of relative peace, the conflict has been fraught with bloodshed since its beginnings. For decades, both Israeli and Palestinian civilians have fallen victim to terrorist attacks and harsh military retaliation. Scott Atran has dubbed these alternating structures of violence perpetrated by Israelis and Palestinians, “stones

against the iron fist” and “terror within a nation.”<sup>1</sup> Atran argues that both Israeli and Palestinian perpetration of violence is justified by material goals, particular modes of violence, and a moral imperative that “defines the ethics of violence for whom and to whom it may be applied.”<sup>2</sup> Both Israelis and Palestinians share the material objective of sovereignty and territorial control. When these are threatened, violence on both sides has been justified. For Israelis, violence against Palestinians is consistently condoned in the name of national security. From the Palestinian perspective, violence is justified as a form of resisting Israeli oppression and ultimately obtaining sovereignty and statehood. Past studies have found that while Israel often reacts strongly to attacks by Palestinians, Palestinian violence is random and unrelated to Israeli offensives. However, more recent empirical findings have demonstrated that Israeli military actions produce an escalation in Palestinian attacks against Israel as well.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, both Israelis and Palestinians underestimate the degree to which the other side’s violence is retaliatory, thereby underestimating their own roles in perpetuating the conflict.<sup>4</sup> Below I provide a brief overview of the Israeli and Palestinian employment of violence in order to contextualize the trends in their attitudes towards the use of violent force.

From the end of the 1967 War to 1999, an estimated 2,178 Israelis were victims of terrorist attacks.<sup>5</sup> From 2000 to 2011 over 6000 Palestinians died as a result of clashes with Israeli security forces or targeted attacks against suspected terrorists.<sup>6</sup> Overall since the creation of Israel in 1948 an estimated 13,000 to 14,500 Israelis and Palestinians have died in the

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<sup>1</sup> Atran, S. "Stones against the Iron Fist, Terror within the Nation: Alternating Structures of Violence and Cultural Identity in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." *Politics & Society* 18.4 (1990): 481-526.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Haushofer, Johannes,, Anat Biletzkib, and Nancy Kanwisher. "Both Sides Retaliate in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." Institute for Empirical Economics, University of Zürich. 2010

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> "Terrorism Deaths in Israel- 1920-1999." Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Web. May 2011.  
<[http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000\\_2009/2000/1/Terrorism deaths in Israel - 1920-1999.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2000/1/Terrorism%20deaths%20in%20Israel%20-%201920-1999.htm)>.

<sup>6</sup> B'Tselem The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories." March. 2011.  
<<http://www.btselem.org/English/index.asp>>.

conflict.<sup>7</sup> While many Palestinian resistant tactics in the First Intifada were nonviolent, acts of violence were also commonplace. These included throwing stones and fire bombs, suicide attacks in public areas in Israel, building barriers, burning tires, knife and gun attacks against Israeli soldiers, and attacking Palestinians known to have collaborated with the IDF. From 1987 to 1989, 626 Palestinians were killed and 37,439 were wounded.<sup>8</sup> From December 1987 to September of 2000, 1,407 Palestinian civilians were killed by Israeli forces and 270 Israeli civilians were killed by Palestinians. One third of Palestinian casualties were children below the age of 18.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the increased efforts at conflict resolution since the 1990's, the use of violence by Israelis and Palestinians has not disappeared. Following the collapse of the Camp David summit talks in 2000, atrocities on both sides mounted. Since the outbreak of the Second Intifada, Israel has openly pursued a policy of targeted killing. Israelis have used helicopter gunships, fighter aircraft, tanks, car bombs, booby traps and bullets in their quest to kill suspected terrorists.<sup>10</sup> On the Palestinian side, between October 2000 and July 2005, suicide bombers carried out 138 attacks in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.<sup>11</sup> Thus the cycles of Israeli Palestinian violence seem to be self perpetuating and have escalated dramatically during both the First and Second Palestinian Intifadas.

### **Trends in Israeli and Palestinian Public Opinion on Violence and the Use of Force**

Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards violence and the use of force are highly correlated with levels of threat perception and casualties. I will explore this Israeli and

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies Bar-ilan University Mideast Security and Policy Studies no. 51

<sup>11</sup> Brym, Robert J., and Bader Araj. "Suicide Bombing as Strategy and Interaction: The Case of the Second Intifada." *Social Forces* 84.4 (2006): 1969-986.

Palestinian support for violence below, providing a brief overview in shifts in attitudes over time on both sides of the conflict. I pay special attention to the periods following the outbreak of the First and Second Intifadas, because the vast majority of survey questions dealing with support for violence and the use of force were asked in these periods.

### **Israeli Support for Violence against Palestinians**

Following the eruption of the First Intifada in December of 1987, survey organizations began to poll Israelis on their support for various counterterrorism policies and the means of quelling the Palestinian uprising. In this period the IDF clashed violently with civilians, and the efficacy of these operations was hotly debated. Israelis endorsed policies of violence against terrorists and leaders of civilian disturbances, but they were often cautious to support the use of force against civilians.<sup>12</sup> In the years following the outbreak of the intifada, just under half of Israelis supported restraining Israeli military actions towards Palestinian civilians.<sup>13</sup> In 1992, only 16% of Israelis considered IDF policies in the territories to be “too harsh,” and over half of Israelis supported bombing terrorist bases even if this meant risking the lives of Palestinian civilians. In 1993 following a wave of terrorist attacks, just over one third of respondents supported using massive force to expel the entire Palestinian population.<sup>14</sup>

While support for violence declined in response to the Oslo Peace Accords, the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September of 2000 shattered this period of more dovish attitudes. In December of 2000, Israelis overwhelmingly (78%) supported using the IDF to stop Palestinian violence and terrorism.<sup>15</sup> A poll in March of 2001 found that almost two thirds of

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<sup>12</sup> Barzilai, G., and E. Inbar. "The Use of Force: Israeli Public Opinion on Military Options." *Armed Forces & Society* 23.1 (1996): 49-80.

<sup>13</sup> Barzilai and Inbar. "The Use of Force: Israeli Public Opinion on Military Options."

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Shamir, Jacob, and Khaill Shikaki. *Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion: the Public Imperative in the Second Intifada*.

Israelis thought that Israel should apply increased military force. By October of 2000, 60% of Israelis supported the entrance of the Israeli military into Palestinian cities.<sup>16</sup> From 2002 to 2004, a majority of Israelis supported targeted killings of Palestinians, even if civilians were injured in the process.<sup>17</sup> These attitudes demonstrate the high levels of Israeli fear and anger that arose in response to the Second Intifada.

However, in the aftermath of the intifada, Israelis began to lose confidence in the ability of military means to eradicate terrorism. When asked “whether it is possible or impossible to wipe out Palestinian terrorism by military operations alone,” only about one fifth of Israelis answered this question in the affirmative between 2005 and 2007.<sup>18</sup> This may be a reflection of more conciliatory attitudes in the aftermath of the 2005 Sharm al-Sheikh agreement.

Unfortunately, questions about Israeli support for the use of violence against Palestinians were not asked frequently in the aftermath of the Second Intifada, limiting the amount of available data.

### **Palestinian Support for Violence against Israelis**

Polling of Palestinians did not begin in large numbers until the early 1990’s with the advent of the Oslo Accords. As a result, data on the trajectory of Palestinian public opinion during the First Intifada is scarce. In the early 1990’s, the Oslo process reduced the appeal of violence among Palestinians. In this period, support for armed attacks on Israeli citizens did not exceed 20%. In 1995, following Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination, support for armed attacks was at 40%. Though support fell to 21% in 1996, with the decline of the peace process and heightened

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

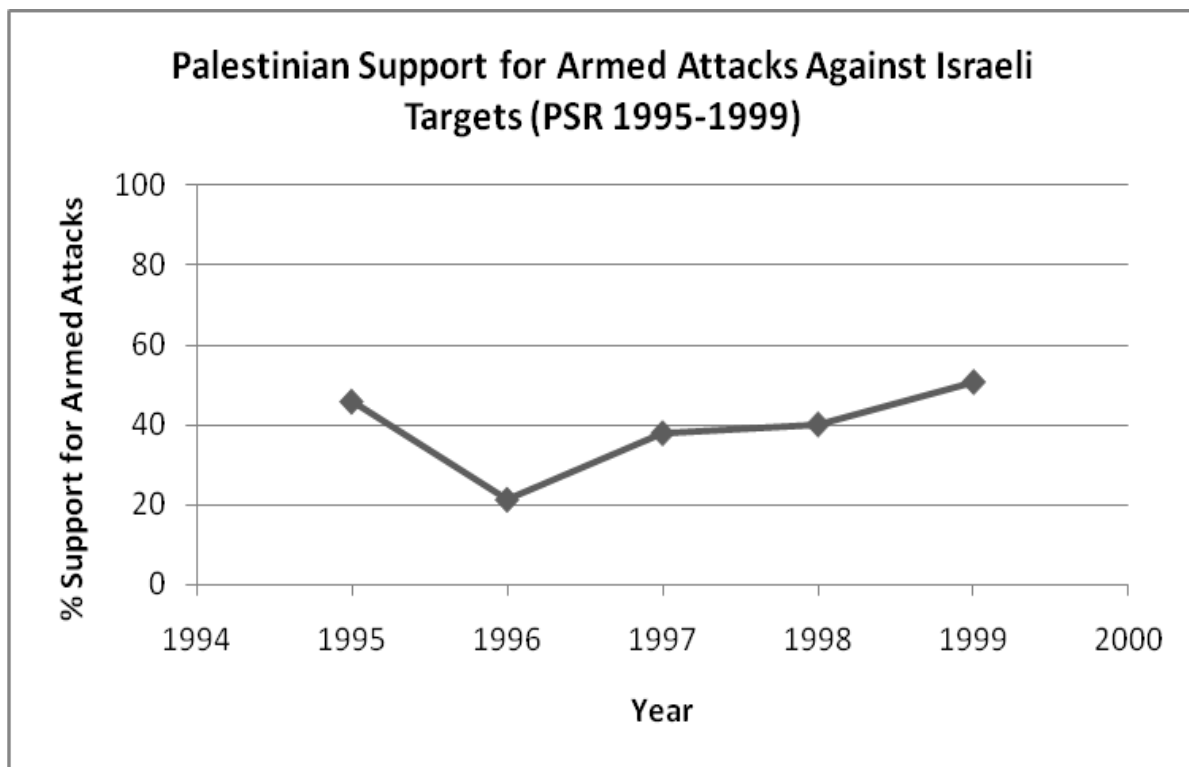
<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*



levels of threat perception in the late 1990's, support for armed attacks rose.<sup>19</sup> By 1999 a majority of Palestinians supported armed attacks for the first time since the start of the Oslo Accords.<sup>20</sup> The overall trends in support for armed attacks in the 1990's are evident in the data collected from the Palestinian Center for Survey Research and are shown below in Figure 5.1.

**Figure 5.1**



With the advent of the Second Intifada, in June 2001, support for attacks against Israeli civilians, including suicide attacks, soared to more than 70%.<sup>21</sup> From 2001 to 2004, support for armed attacks against Israeli targets remained high.<sup>22</sup> Following the Sharm al-Sheikh summit and

<sup>19</sup> Shikaki, Khalil. *Willingness to Compromise: Palestinian Public Opinion and the Peace Process*. Diane Publishing. 2009. 8.

<sup>20</sup> PSR 1995-1999

<sup>21</sup> Shikaki. *Willingness to Compromise: Palestinian Public Opinion and the Peace Process*.

<sup>22</sup> Shamir and Shikaki. *Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion: the Public Imperative in the Second Intifada*.

the end of the Second Intifada, support for armed attacks fell. In March 2005 only 29% of Palestinians supported the suicide attack carried out in Tel Aviv. Interestingly, 75% of Palestinians had supported the suicide attacks at Maxim restaurant in Haifa in October of 2003, and 77% had supported the attack at Ber Shiva in 2004.<sup>23</sup> This indicates the dramatic drop off of support for violent attacks against Israeli civilians ushered in with the end of the Second Intifada.

Despite this, by 2006 threat perception was on the rise and support for attacks against Israeli military and civilian targets had increased dramatically.<sup>24</sup> In 2007, a lack of confidence in the Annapolis peace initiative caused support for violence to remain high.<sup>25</sup> By March of 2008, with the peace process all but collapsed, support for suicide bombings, rocket attacks, and other violence against Israeli civilians rose once again.<sup>26</sup> The confrontations between Israel and Palestinians in Gaza in 2009 brought high levels of pessimism, threat perception, and support for armed attacks. In fact, in this period 40% of respondents reported a desire to return to an armed intifada as opposed to engaging in peace negotiations.<sup>27</sup>

This summary of Israeli and Palestinian support for the use of violence against one another indicates high levels of support for violence when it is expected to improve security on the Israeli side or to obtain concessions on the Palestinian side. Similarly, as detailed above, support for violence is highly reciprocal, as both Israelis and Palestinians believe the violence they perpetrate can be justified as a retaliatory measure.

### **Gender and Violence: Hypothesis and Methodology**

Past studies of gender and public opinion have found a.) that women are less supportive of the use of military force and b.) that when casualties or the cost of war are explicitly

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> PSR Poll 20

<sup>25</sup> PSR Poll 26

<sup>26</sup> PSR Poll 27

<sup>27</sup> PSR 34

mentioned, women tend to be even less supportive of the use of force than men. Despite this, most studies of gender difference in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion have not analyzed survey questions that mention the violent use of force or its consequences. In order to address this gap in past analysis, in this section I investigate the following research question: Are Israeli and Palestinian women are less supportive of the use of force than men when they are aware of its violent consequences, including civilian deaths and military casualties?

I hypothesize that survey questions that include specific mentions of violence and the human cost of war will evoke a more dovish response from women than men. If there is no gender gap in these survey questions, my research will call into question some key assumptions in the gender and public opinion literature. That being said, it is important to recognize the role that threat perception and views of enemy aspirations may play in mitigating these gender differences.

Violence is a part of daily existence for Israeli and Palestinian men and women. Israeli parents may fear that their children will be blown up riding the bus to school or that their sons will die fighting in the territories when a Palestinian child throws a Molotov cocktail. Similarly, Palestinians fear harsh retaliatory attacks from the IDF, the shooting of their children, and the bulldozing of their homes. As Souss explains in his *Letter to a Jewish Friend*, “Every act of violence is a terrorist act because it strikes terror...Israeli bombing raids cause as much terror to Palestinian children as do hails of machine gun fire from Palestine guerillas to Israeli children.”<sup>28</sup> Perhaps under these conditions of cyclical violence that spark higher levels of threat perception in women than men, the expected gender gap may be tempered.

In order to test this hypothesis in Israel, I examine survey data from the Israeli Election Studies. To assess Palestinian attitudes, I analyze survey questions from the Palestinian Center

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<sup>28</sup> Souss, Ibrahim. *Letter to a Jewish Friend*. 57

for Survey Research. I also use data from the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) which asked very explicit questions relating to the use of violence and its consequences for Israelis and Palestinians following the outbreak of the Second Intifada.

I do not have access to Israeli survey questions asked consistently over time. This is partly due to the fact that questions dealing with support for violence and its costs have only been asked at times of high levels of violence surrounding the intifadas. That being said, I do have access to data from two questions from the Israeli Election Study that address this issue.

These Israeli survey questions are:

- *What is your attitude towards bombing terrorist bases even if civilians get hurt? Definitely supports, supports, opposes, definitely opposes* (IES 1988)
- *How do you evaluate the government's policies in the territories? Too harsh, about right, or too permissive?* (IES 1992)

In terms of Palestinian data, I analyze a series of questions about support for attacks against Israeli military and civilian targets from 1995 to 1999. I also have access to a set of questions from the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), including several that ask explicitly about the use of violence against Israelis. The Palestinian survey questions that I have chosen to examine are:

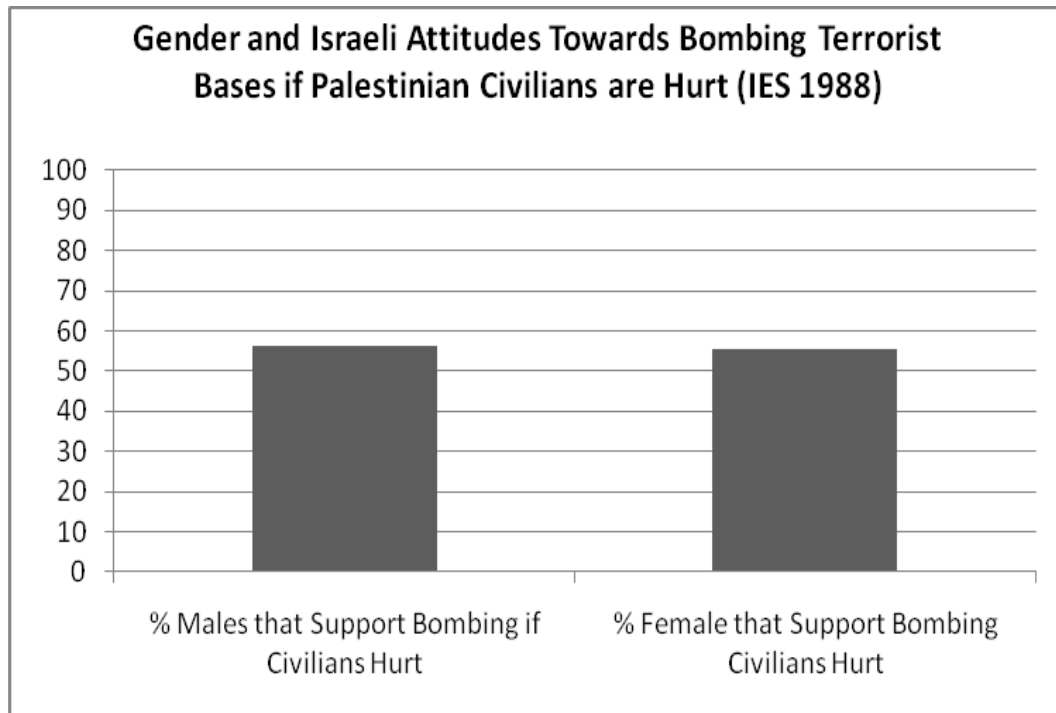
- *Do you support or oppose armed attacks against Israeli military or civilian targets?* (PSR 1995-1999)
- *Do you approve of suicide attacks if they injure Israeli civilians?* (PIPA 2002)
- *Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Violence that hurts women and children is inconsistent with Palestinian moral character?* (PIPA 2002)
- *Do you agree with the following statement: Since Palestinian civilians suffer at the hands of Israelis, Israeli civilians should suffer at the hands of Palestinians?* (PIPA 2002)

To test my hypothesis, I analyze the responses to each of these Israeli and Palestinian survey questions by gender in order to ascertain whether or not there is a gender gap in attitudes towards the violent use of force and its graphic consequences.

### **Israeli Results**

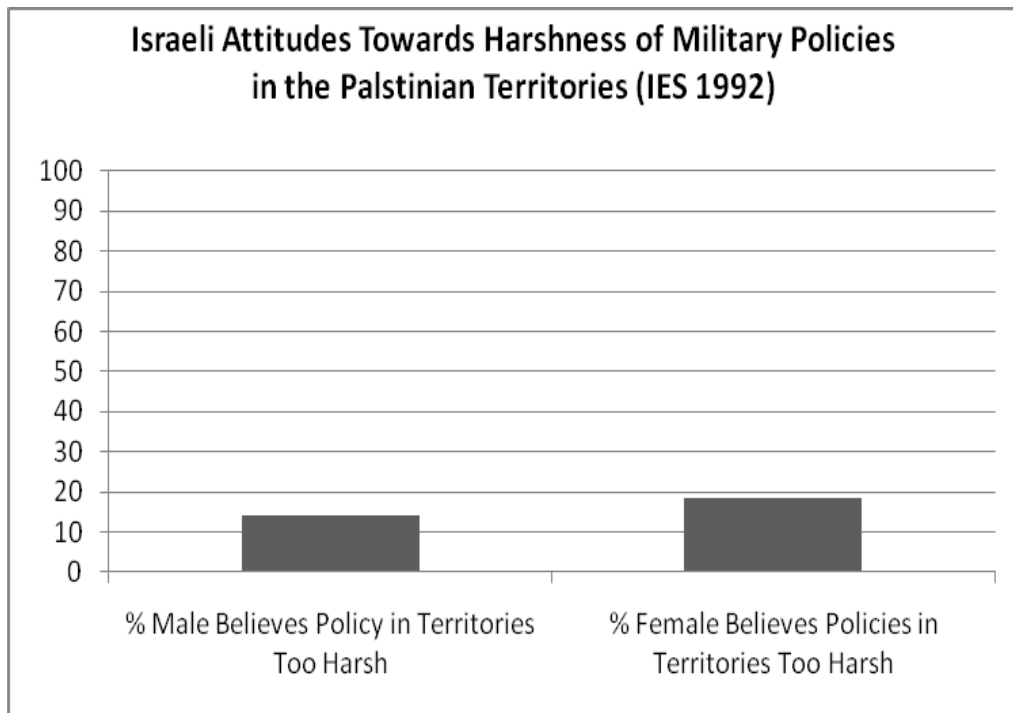
Although I only had access to two relevant survey questions asked by the Israeli Election Studies during the First Intifada, the results are nonetheless telling (Figure 5.2). In response to the question, *What is your attitude towards bombing terrorist bases even if civilians get hurt?* 56% of Israeli men and 56% of Israeli women responded that they would support or strongly support the operation. This clear absence of a gender gap is striking. Support for military operations that involve civilian casualties in other countries has been highly gendered. It is also important to note, however, that this particular survey question mentions the bombing of Palestinian *terrorist* bases. Given high levels of female worry of personal attack and the resultant lack of a gender gap in their assessments of Arab Aspirations, perhaps it is not surprising that women and men have similar attitudes towards attacking terrorist bases. In this case, civilian deaths may be viewed as collateral damage or retaliatory measures. While women might generally be more inclined to oppose policies that result in civilian deaths, we have seen that they are also more likely to fear terrorist attacks. These competing attitudes may cancel out any potential gender gap that might otherwise be present.

**Figure 5.2**



In response to the 1992 question *How do you evaluate the government's policies in the territories?* male and female attitudes are similar. Women evaluated policies as “too harsh” at a slightly higher rate than men with 14% of men viewing policies as “too harsh” compared to 18% of women. Though this is not a statistically significant difference, it could be indicative of the female belief that IDF policies against Palestinian civilians in the First Intifada were too harsh. Again, the absence of a significant gender gap can most likely be explained by heightened female threat perception during this particularly violent period.

**Figure 5.3**



### **Gender, Threat Perception, and Support for Violence**

In order to assess the relationship between respondents' gender, levels of threat perception, and support for harsh policies in the territories, I conducted three way cross tabulations like those that I carried out in Chapter 4. As Figure 5.4 illustrates, the higher the level of worry that respondents report, the more they support harsher policies in the Palestinian territories. This indicates that support for violence, like support for the peace process, is driven by levels of threat perception..

**Figure 5.4**

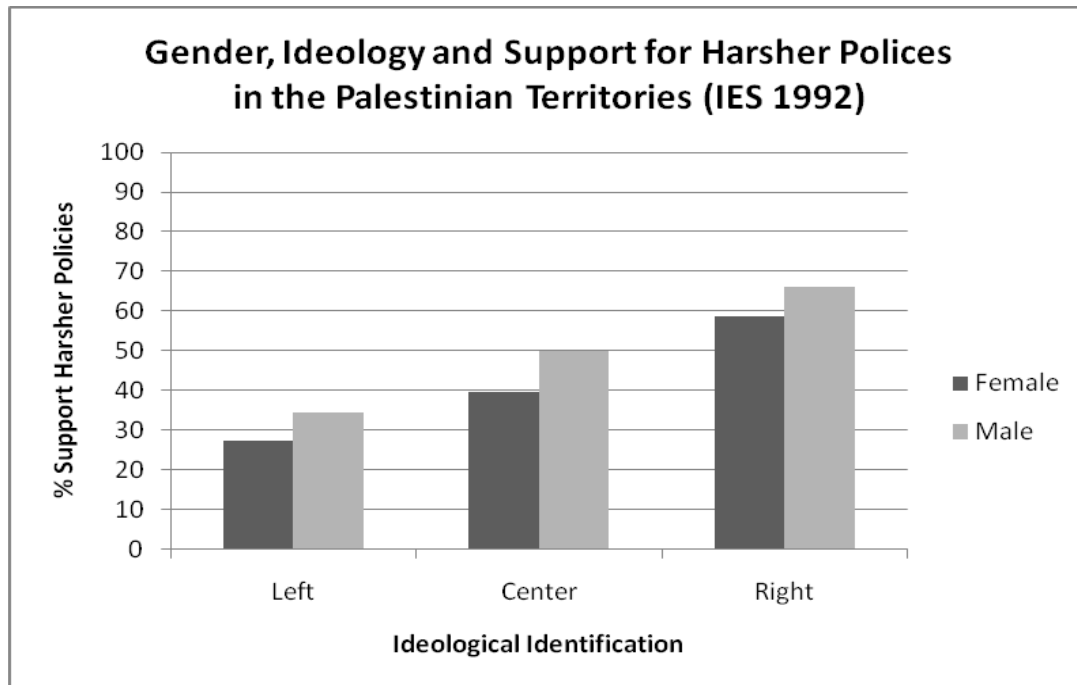


In order to gain a better understanding of the apparent absence of a gender gap in Israeli attitudes towards the use of violence, it would be useful to have more survey questions over a longer time period. Though further investigation is warranted, it is likely that threat perception—which has been shown to heavily impact attitudes towards the use of violence generally—has played a role in eliminating the gender gap.

As with support for peaceful means of conflict resolution, in addition to threat perception, political ideology is also an important determinant of support for harsher policies in the Palestinian territories. As Figure 5.5 demonstrates, those on the right are much more supportive of harsh policies than those on the left. As was true in the previous chapter, there small gender differences within each ideological group.



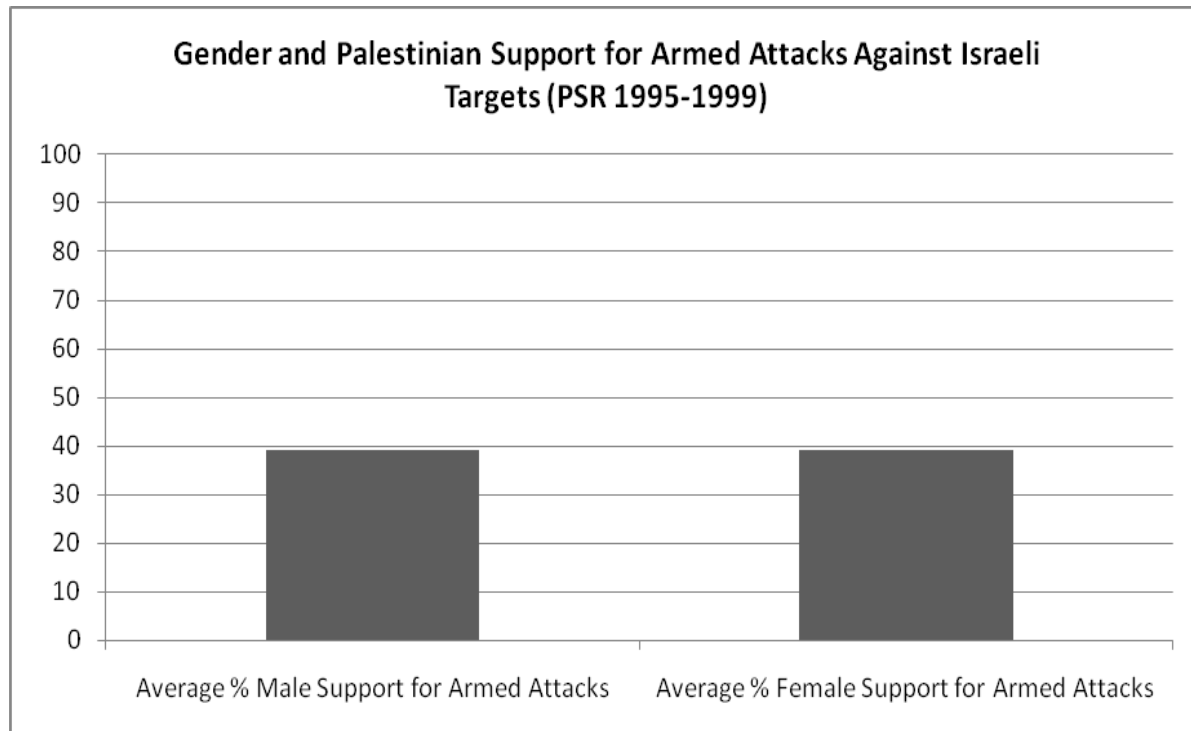
Figure 5.5



### Palestinian Results

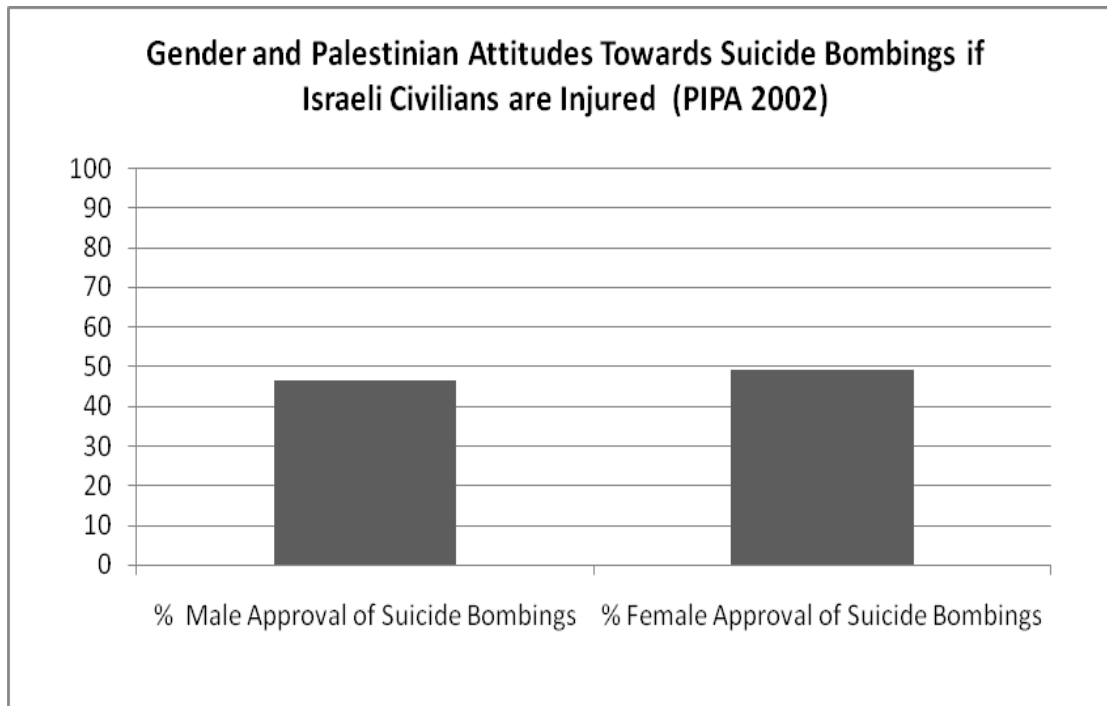
Like the Israeli results, generally speaking there is no gender gap in Palestinian attitudes towards the use of violence and suicide attacks against Israeli targets. As Figure 5.6 indicates, over a five year period, in response to the survey question *Do you support or oppose armed attacks against Israeli military or civilian targets?*, average male and female support was exactly equal: 39% of men and 39% of women supported armed attacks against Israeli civilian and military targets. As I concluded in my analysis of the Israeli data, high levels of female Palestinian threat perception may have eliminated any gender gap that might otherwise have been present in response to this question.

**Figure 5.6**



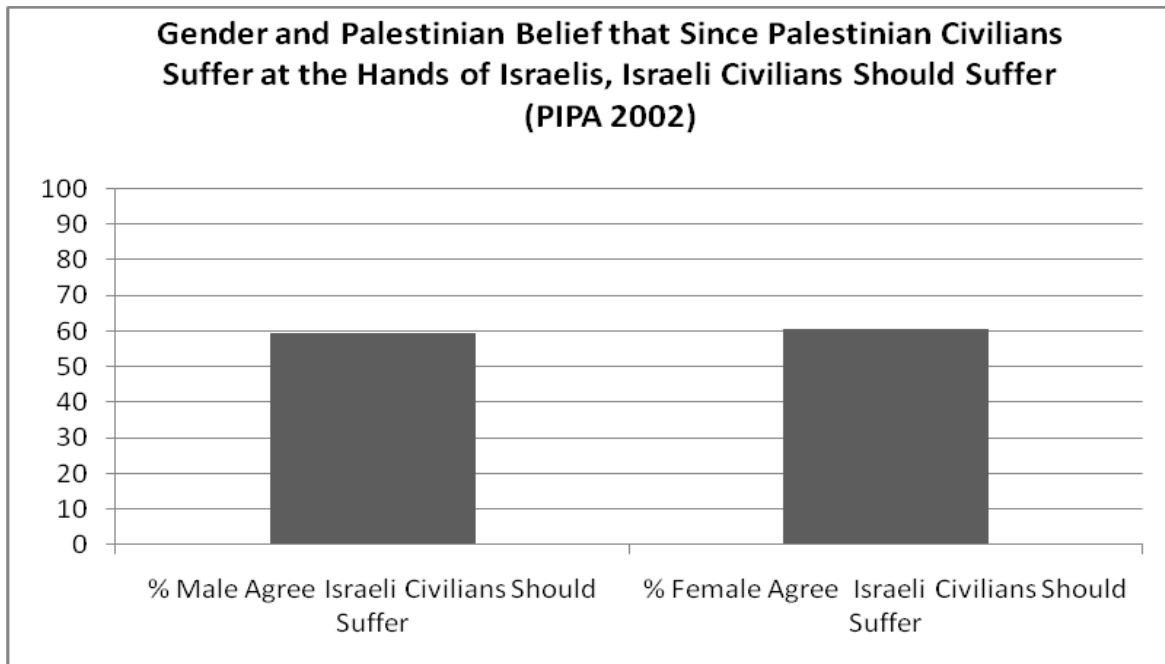
In line with these results, in response to the slightly more graphic question, *Do you approve of suicide attacks if they injure Israeli civilians?*, there was no statistically significant gender gap with 47% of women and 49% of men supporting these attacks. It is interesting to see that in the midst of high levels of violence during the Second Intifada, the breakdown of gender matched what I found in the survey data from the Palestinian Center for Survey Research in the 1990's. This most likely indicates that this absence of a gender gap is unchanged by events on the ground.

**Figure 5.7**



Notably, in response to the more explicit question, *Do you agree with the following statement: Since Palestinian civilians suffer at the hands of Israelis, Israeli civilians should suffer at the hands of Palestinians?* there was also no gender gap, with 60% of men and 60% of women supporting this statement. This may also be partially due to question wording. Since this question also mentions the suffering of Palestinian civilians, an issue which Palestinian women would likely be very sensitive to, it may have hardened their attitudes and tapped into their support for revenge and retribution.

**Figure 5.8**

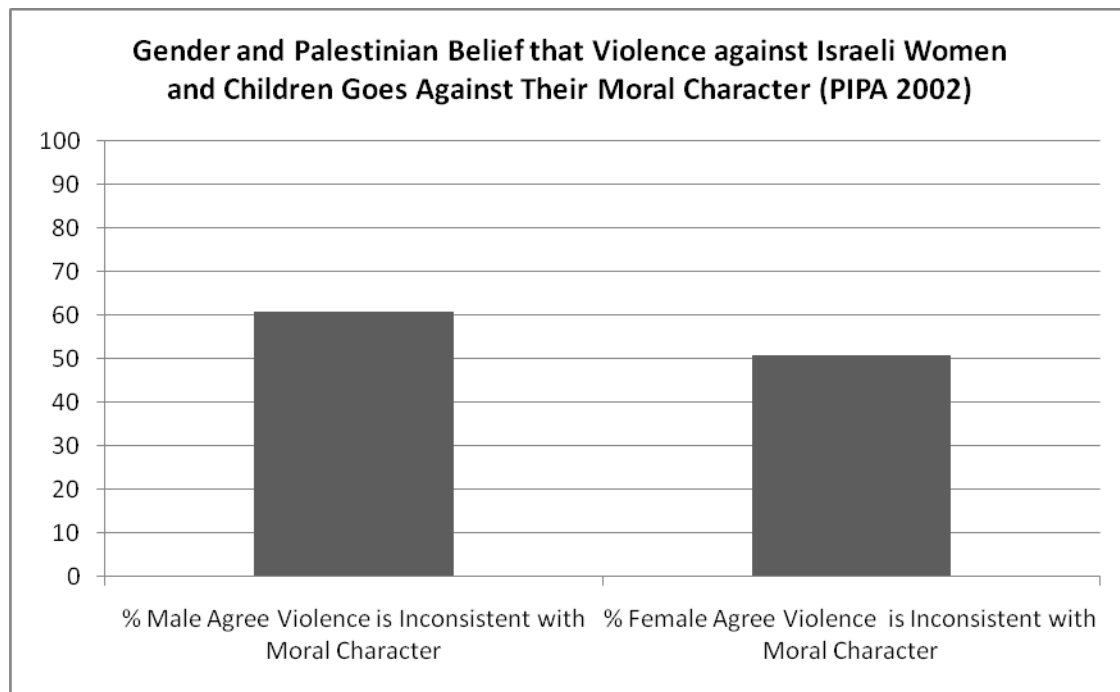


Finally, the survey question that most explicitly described of civilian violence, caused a gender gap to emerge in the opposite direction than I had expected. In response to the question, *Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Violence that hurts women and children is inconsistent with Palestinian moral character?* 61% of Palestinian men agreed with this statement compared with only 51% of women.<sup>29</sup> This “reverse” gender gap definitely warrants further study as it cannot easily be explained by threat perception or other factors. A possible explanation is that women in the midst of the Second Intifada who were not fighting on the front lines of Palestinian resistance felt a strong desire to prove their loyalty to the Palestinian cause. Furthermore, these women whose children were likely fighting the IDF with stones, Molotov cocktails, and other makeshift weapons perhaps felt that any violence perpetrated by their vulnerable children was fully justified. This could fit in with Yael Yishai’s findings that Israeli women often feel a pressure to express ultra-nationalistic attitudes due to their inability to

<sup>29</sup> This gender gap was statistically significant to the .001 level.

participate in combat. Thus the reverse gender gap may be a unique product of the protracted violence that has wracked Israel and Palestine for decades.

**Figure 5.9**



## Conclusion

Although attitudes towards the use of force have proven to be highly gendered, especially when the human costs of war are made known, my analysis of Israeli and Palestinian data is at odds with this general research consensus. In all but one of my measures of Israeli and Palestinian public opinion on these issues, there was no statistically significant gender gap. Furthermore, the one gender gap I found was a “reverse” gender gap in which Palestinian men were more inclined than women to believe that violence against women and children was against Palestinian moral character.

While my data was somewhat limited and this issue requires further study, I posit that the highly gendered nature of Israeli and Palestinian threat perception and the inability of women to fight on the front lines of the conflict may have tempered any gendered attitudes that might otherwise exist. Regardless of the reasoning behind the absence of a gender gap in the Israel and Palestine, this could have important implications both for the understanding of Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards the use of force and on the study of gender and politics more broadly. Despite high levels of female involvement in peace activism, and disproportionate support for peace negotiations highlighted in Chapter 4, these results indicate that Israeli and Palestinian women do not have more dovish attitudes regarding the human and humanitarian costs of war than men. This may signify that the protracted violence that characterizes the Israeli and Palestinian contexts and high levels of threat perception can override gendered attitudes towards the use of force. More broadly, these findings also suggest that the gender differences found in other nations may be context specific.

## Chapter 6

### Defense and Social Spending in Israel and Palestine

Along with the findings on threat perception, support for peace negotiations, and support for the use of violence, the gendered nature of fiscal policy preferences on defense and social spending has been observed in a variety of international contexts. This research has revealed that women are consistently less supportive of defense spending than men and more inclined to support funding of education, healthcare, welfare, and other forms of social spending. This data has been coupled with a growing body of literature indicating that attitudes towards fiscal policies and economic conditions play a key role in shaping partisanship and overall policy preferences.<sup>1</sup> (Kaufmann and Petrocik, 1999, Eichenberg, 2003) Despite this consistent gender gap, as Eichenberg writes in his 2003 study of gender differences in support for defense spending and the use of force in the U.S., “this set of priorities could be suppressed by crisis and war.”<sup>2</sup>

While there is clear evidence pointing to the important relationship between fiscal attitudes and policy preferences, past studies of gender and public opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian context have neglected to examine gender differences in support for defense and social spending. In this chapter, I will investigate whether or not this gendered support for defense and social spending is present in the midst of the protracted violence that has wracked Israeli and Palestinian societies for decades.

Before presenting my own findings, I first provide some background information on social and defense spending in Israel and Palestine. I then lay out a brief overview of Israeli and

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<sup>1</sup> Kaufmann, Karen M. and John R. Petrocik. 1999. “The Changing Politics of American Men: Understanding the Sources of the Gender Gap.” *American Journal of Political Science* 43(3):864–887.

<sup>2</sup> Eichenberg, Richard. “Gender Differences in Attitudes Toward the Use of Force by the United States, 1990-2003,” *International Security* (Summer 2003).

Palestinian attitudes towards social and defense spending. Finally, I present my hypothesis, methodology, and the results of my analysis of gender and fiscal attitudes in Israel and Palestine.

### **Overview of Social and Defense Spending in Israel and Palestine**

Before outlining trends in Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards public spending, it is important to have a sense the nature of public spending in each society. The provision of social and defense services and the funding behind them is dramatically different in Israel and Palestine. Gaining a general understanding of these systems provides important insight into the factors that shape public opinion on public spending. Furthermore, these structures play important role in shaping my own methodology for assessing the gendered nature of support for social and defense spending later in this chapter.

### **Public Spending in Israel**

As a nation that has faced existential threats to its existence since its declaration of Independence in 1948, it is not surprising that defense spending has been a key national priority in Israel. Since its earliest days Israel has always devoted a large part of its budget to defense spending. From 1950 to 1966, Israel spent an average of 9% of its GDP on defense. Real defense expenditures increased dramatically after both the 1967 and 1973 wars.<sup>3</sup> Throughout most of the 1970s, after the Yom Kippur War, defense spending was over one-quarter of Israel's entire domestic output. It decreased to pre-1973 levels of roughly 20% of GDP in the 1980's and declined steadily following the introduction of the Economic Stabilization Program.<sup>4</sup> Between 1985 and 2004, Israel's spending on defense was four times higher than that

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<sup>3</sup> "Israel." *U.S. Department of State*. Web. 09 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3581.htm>>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



of the average nation in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).<sup>5</sup> Over this twenty year period, Israel's defense spending averaged 10.4% of GDP, whereas the average for OECD countries in this period was 2.8%. In 2008, Israel was the top per capita defense spender in the world with the government spending \$2,300 per person in defense dollars. This is \$300 more than per capita defense spending in the United States, the country that boasted the second largest ratio. In 2009 and 2010 the Israeli Defense Ministry budget was 15% of the national budget.<sup>6</sup>

Despite these high levels of defense spending, social spending in Israel has nonetheless remained high. Between 1985 and 2004, average civilian expenditure was 35.6% of GDP, which is very close to the average for other OECD nations. High levels of poverty and income disparities since the 1970's have caused per capita welfare payments to quadruple. Even after a sharp cutback in welfare payments in the early 2000s, average per capita payments continued to grow. In the early 1990's, over 800,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union arrived in Israel. This drove the unemployment rate to 11.2% in 1992. Because Israel is committed to providing its population with social services, this influx of immigrants was a strain on the economy. In this period over half of public expenditure was spent on health care, unemployment assistance, and other social service programs.<sup>7</sup>

These consistently high levels of defense and social spending have caused Israeli public spending to far outstrip income for decades. As a result, government debt has increased substantially. For example, in 1984 interest payments alone totaled 16.2% of GDP. This was the

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<sup>5</sup> "The Shekel Stops Here / The Defense-spending Scapegoat - Haaretz Daily Newspaper | Israel News." *Israel News - Haaretz Israeli News Source*. Web. 09 Mar. 2011. <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/business/the-shekel-stops-here-the-defense-spending-scapegoat-1.305870>

<sup>6</sup> Ben-David, Dan. "A Look at Israel's National Priorities." *Taub Center For Social Policy Studies In Israel* Policy Paper No. 2010.02

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

equivalent of the governments' total expenditure on education, health, welfare and housing combined. Although defense spending declined somewhat in the 1980's, this was accompanied by a rise in of social spending— especially following the influx of the Soviet immigrants in the 1990's.<sup>8</sup> In summary, since its inception the state of Israel has contended with heavy defense burdens and high interest payments on debt. This has been compounded by high rates of inflation by Western standards that have been driven by government expenditures that far exceed tax revenues. Finally, high rates of poverty, income disparity, and a slow rate of economic growth (compared to Western democracies) have created further economic difficulties.<sup>9</sup>

### **Public Spending in Palestine**

For the majority of Palestinians, the provision of social services is a matter of survival. According to the UN Human Development Report, while most Palestinians have access to enough food aid to sustain themselves, they are “unable to feed themselves and remain in a state of dependency.”<sup>10</sup> Food insecurity, high rates of child mortality, lack of access to healthcare, and high levels of unemployment are commonplace in the Palestinian territories. Furthermore, access to clean water, electricity, sewage lines and other basic amenities are scarce.<sup>11</sup> While the education system in the Palestinian territories is impressive, with the average literacy rate over 94%, and the healthcare system has improved somewhat over the past few years, the overall economic conditions remain dire.<sup>12</sup> Insecure economic and political conditions threaten to push many Palestinians clustered just above the poverty line into abject poverty.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> "The Shekel Stops Here / The Defense-spending Scapegoat - Haaretz Daily Newspaper | Israel News." *Israel News - Haaretz Israeli News Source*. Web. 09 Mar. 2011. <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/business/the-shekel-stops-here-the-defense-spending-scapegoat-1.305870>

<sup>10</sup> 2009 UN Human Development Report Palestine  
<http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/national/arabstates/palestine/name,3339,en.html>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

For a nation that lacks statehood, the provision of social services is somewhat complex. Palestinians receive substantial international aid, which in 2008, made up about a third of Palestinian GDP. As of 2008, foreign aid provided services to nearly half of the Palestinian population and funded the salaries of the Palestinian Authority's nearly 140,000 employees.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) handles most of the needs of the refugees. The organization has built health centers and hospitals that provide free basic health care.<sup>14</sup> UNRWA also supplies educational and social services, as well as welfare benefits for the unemployed in addition to supporting people with disabilities and the elderly.<sup>15</sup>

Funding for the education system comes from the government budget through the Ministry of Finance, and government expenditures on education totaled 17.9% of total government expenditure in 2003. Additional education funding comes from donors and international organizations.<sup>16</sup> In terms of healthcare, as of 2004, 38.6% of Palestinians were covered by the Governmental Health Insurance scheme, 14.8% were covered by UNRWA, 7.8% were covered by private insurance schemes, and about 40% had no insurance coverage. Since the late 1990's, government spending on healthcare has increased as the government has been able to finance governmental health insurance with tax revenues.<sup>17</sup>

Although Palestine is not permitted to have a regular military force, defense and security spending nonetheless play an important role in the allocation of public funds. Under the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian National Authority was authorized to recruit and train a police force with paramilitary capabilities. A series of bilateral agreements between the PNA and Israel

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<sup>13</sup> Avis, Jacob. "Palestinian Worker's Rights" *Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group*. May 2010.

<sup>14</sup> 2009 UN Human Development Report Palestine

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Mustafa, Mohammed Matar and Khalid Bisharat "Palestinian National Authority." TIMSS 2007 Encyclopedia: A Guide to Mathematics and Science Education Around the World, Volume 2, Boston: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center . 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Health care policy in Palestine: challenges and opportunities Motasem Hamdan, Ph.D. School of Public Health, Al-Quds University, Jerusalem [mhamdan@med.alquds.edu](mailto:mhamdan@med.alquds.edu)

regulate the size of the force, its structure, armament, and composition.<sup>18</sup> Though the Palestinian forces have various branches and have been reorganized many times, they have continued to perform several key functions. The Palestinian security forces carry out many of the duties of regular police forces, such as dealing with crime, traffic, and other typical aspects of law enforcement. In addition, they work to protect Palestinian national security by patrolling the borders of areas under Palestinian control, guarding checkpoints, and providing manpower for joint patrols with Israel.<sup>19</sup> The Palestinian security forces have also played important roles in preventing terrorist attacks by Palestinians in Israel.

The funding of the Palestinian Security Forces does not simply come from tax collection efforts of the Palestinian Authority. Instead, it has largely been funded by the United States and the international community. In fact, American Lieutenant General Keith Dayton has even overseen a 2000 man branch of the Palestinian National Security Force that has patrolled borders and confronted Hamas in a series of attempts to stop attacks against Israel.<sup>20</sup> Though the Palestinian Security Forces may not represent the defense and security interests of all Palestinians, they are the closest thing Palestinians have to a military. Therefore their funding can perhaps be considered a form of “defense spending.”

Corruption has been a major concern in the provision of social services and security forces in the Palestinian territories. Levels of trust in the PLO and later the PA have always been mixed, and evidence of corruption abounds. The PLO used drug trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering and counterfeiting to accumulate a fortune estimated by the British National

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<sup>18</sup> Cook, Steven A. "Reorganizing the Palestinian Security Forces." Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 09 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.cfr.org/israel/middle-east-reorganizing-palestinian-security-forces/p8081#p1>>.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

Criminal Intelligence Services to have reached about \$10 billion by 1994.<sup>21</sup> The PLO had known connections to international criminal organizations, drug cartels, terrorist groups, and states from Libya, Iran and Iraq, to North Korea and the Sudan. When the PLO became the Palestinian Authority in 1993 under the provisions of the Oslo Accords, corruption continued and perhaps even expanded.<sup>22</sup> Corruption at various local levels has also been problematic due to a lack of oversight and accountability.<sup>23</sup>

### **Israeli and Palestinian Attitudes towards Public Spending**

Although the conditions of public spending in Israel and Palestine are drastically different, and the issues of concern are diverse, understanding the trajectories of public opinion on spending issues over the past two decades will provide important insight into studying the gendered nature of these opinions later in this chapter.

#### **Israeli Attitudes**

The main debates in Israeli discourse over public spending have centered on the appropriate levels of defense and social spending and the balance between public spending and paying high interest payments on national debt. Due to the existential threats that have endangered Israel since its creation, the defense budget has often been placed on a pedestal and made untouchable. This attitude is reflected in the levels of support for security spending over time collected by the Israeli Election Studies from 1992 to 2006. In every year, Israelis supported increasing security spending by a majority ranging from about two thirds to three quarters of the population. Fluctuations in opinion on security spending seem to correlate with changes in government spending. For example, defense spending dropped from 11.5% of GDP in 1992 to

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<sup>21</sup> Ehrenfeld, Rachel. "Where does the money go? A study of the Palestinian Authority." American Center for Democracy, New York City. October 2002.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

just 9.5% in 1996. This change corresponds to the fact that 76% of Israelis supported an increase in defense spending in 1996, a ten percent increase from 1992. In 1998 Israel approved a \$54 billion budget for 1999 which increased the defense budget.<sup>24</sup> Following this rise in defense spending, Israeli support for security spending fell to 65%. In 2003, in the midst of the Second Intifada, although the defense budget accounted for 16% of total expenditure, support for increased security spending still totaled almost 70%.<sup>25</sup> In 2006 support for increasing security spending fell to 59% in line with a plan to decrease defense spending incrementally between 2004 and 2006.<sup>26</sup> Thus the defense budget moves in line with public opinion in Israel, much as it does on other Western democracies.

In terms of social services, support for spending also seems to coincide with fluctuations in the budget. That being said, Israelis are overall very supportive of spending money on social services. Between 1992 and 2006 a willingness to increase education spending fluctuated from 80% to almost 90%. Similarly support for increased healthcare spending ranged from 79 to 92%. Support for welfare and unemployment spending in the same period ranged from 46% to 70%. The lowest rate of support occurred in 1992 and 1996 and may have been a negative reaction to the large influx of immigrants from the Soviet Union in the mid 1990's. These trends in support for security spending and defense spending are evident in the two graphs below. While support for both security spending and social spending are consistently high, the graphs are inverses of one another. This demonstrates that the Israeli public is well informed and well aware of the

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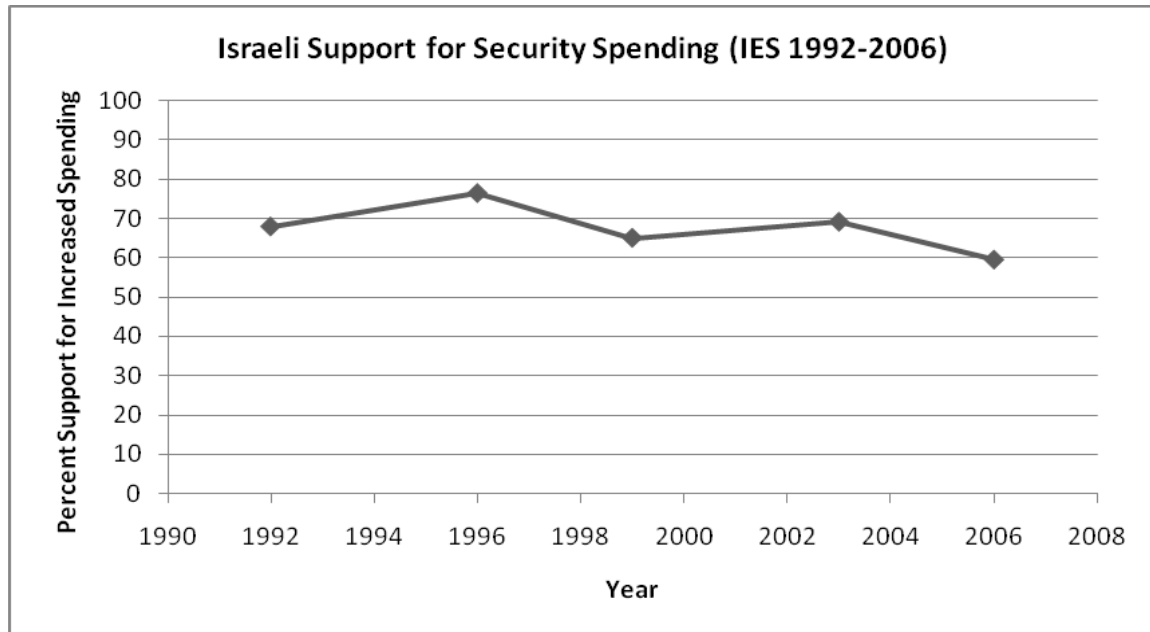
<sup>24</sup> INSS "Israeli Defense Expenditure 2010  
[http://www.alzaytouna.net/english/Docs/2010/INSS\\_Isr\\_Defense\\_Expenditure\\_2010.pdf](http://www.alzaytouna.net/english/Docs/2010/INSS_Isr_Defense_Expenditure_2010.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> "Military Spending / An Extra Command and Several Brigades - Haaretz Daily Newspaper | Israel News." Israel News - Haaretz Israeli News Source. Web. 09 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/business/military-spending-an-extra-command-and-several-brigades-1.101240>>.

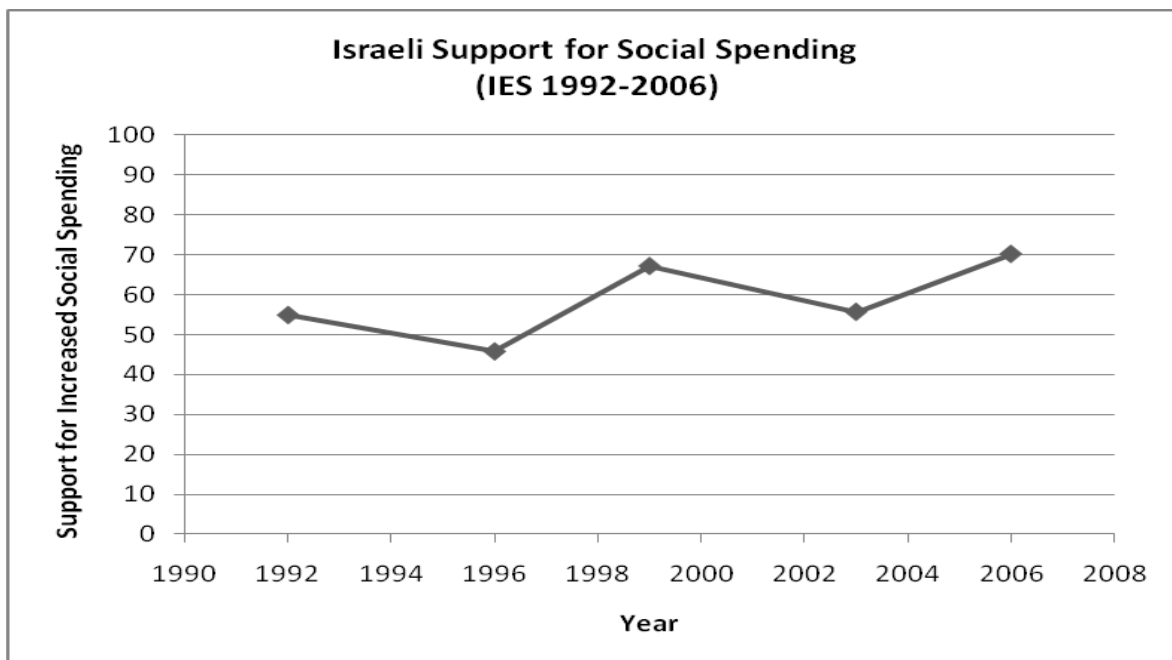
<sup>26</sup> Eiland, Gloria. "Israel's Defense Budget" INSS Insight. 2004.  
<http://www.canadafreepress.com/2007/inss061807a.htm>

tradeoffs that must be made in the budget between social spending and defense spending due to resources limitations.

**Figure 6.1**



**Figure 6.2**



## Palestinian Attitudes

As the above explanation of public spending in the Palestinian territories on social services and security indicates, these concepts are quite complex and difficult to capture with public opinion surveys. That being said, data on the ratings of political parties based on their perceived abilities to provide social services and security and their perceived levels of corruption and trustworthiness are available. For example, Hamas devotes much of its estimated \$70 million annual budget to an extensive network of social services. Hamas funds schools, healthcare clinics, orphanages, mosques, soup kitchens, and sports leagues. As Israeli scholar Reuven Paz writes, "Approximately 90 percent of [Hamas'] work is in social, welfare, cultural, and educational activities."<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Hamas has developed a reputation for having far lower levels of corruption than other political parties.

In the face of the Palestinian Authority's inability to provide sufficient social services and its reputation for corruption, Hamas was able to garner a lot of support by presenting itself as a viable alternative to Fatah in the 2006 elections. Hamas gained particular popularity among Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, though it also garnered support in the West Bank. As the Council on Foreign Relations reports, Hamas' popularity stems from "its welfare wing providing social services to Palestinians in the occupied territories, including school and hospital construction."<sup>28</sup> Healthcare services provided by Hamas have been particularly extensive, greatly facilitating hospital and physicians services in Palestine." In addition, Hamas has built Islamic charities, libraries, and education centers for women in addition to kindergartens and nurseries that provide free meals to children. Refugees and homeless Palestinians are also able to claim financial and

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<sup>27</sup> Kaplan, Eben. "Hamas." Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 09 Mar. 2011.  
<<http://www.cfr.org/israel/hamas/p8968>>.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*



technical assistance from Hamas.<sup>29</sup> While Hamas is not without other motives and has been decried as a terrorist organization for supporting suicide attacks and other violent actions, the provision of social services has certainly helped the party to garner support.

Hamas's approval has historically fluctuated dramatically. Following the collapse of the peace process in the late 1990s, Hamas' popularity increased as support for Arafat waned. Though Hamas attracted a fair amount of support following the outbreak of the Second Intifada, by 2004 trust in Hamas had dropped somewhat.<sup>30</sup> Hamas experienced a spike in popularity after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in August 2005. In 2006 disillusionment with Fatah's corruption and inability to provide social services helped Hamas achieve victory in the Palestinian elections. In late 2008 and early 2009, during another violent flare up which resulted in Israeli land raids into the Gaza Strip, several news agencies reported that Hamas' popularity had stayed constant or even increased. However, by the end of June, public support for Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip fell again.<sup>31</sup>

While it is clear that a variety of factors influence Palestinian support for Hamas including levels of violence and the intensity of confrontations with Israel, it is impossible to ignore the economic factors. For Palestinians "security" does not just mean military protection. Instead, it encompasses food security, access to clean water, healthcare, education, and other basic needs. The fact that Hamas can provide these social services has played a key role in its popularity.<sup>32</sup> The correlation between economic need and support for Hamas is evident below in Figure 6.3. The Figure compares the Palestinian unemployment rate and support for Hamas

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<sup>29</sup> Levitt, Matthew . *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*. Yale University Press. 2007. 122.

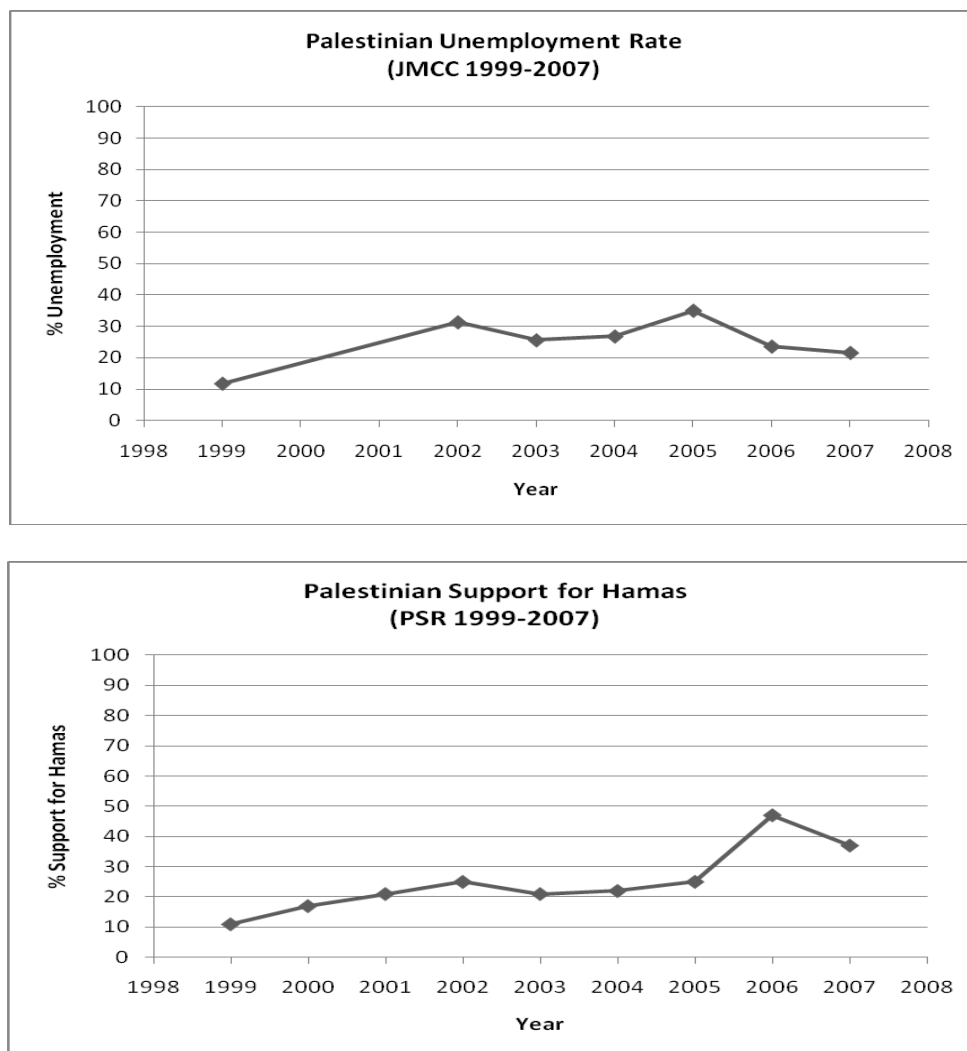
<sup>30</sup> JMCC

<sup>31</sup> Levitt, . *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*. 122.

<sup>32</sup> Zeevi, Dror. "What Do Palestinians Really Want: The Social Implications of the Hamas Victory." Crown Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Brandeis University. 2006.

between 1999 and 2007. Although this does not prove a causal relationship as other factors are likely involved, the correlation is clear. There is a notable spike in unemployment in 2002, which also corresponds with a spike in support for Hamas. Then the second spike in unemployment on 2005 comes right before the election of Hamas in 2006 and a time period in which Hamas enjoyed majority support. This trend indicates that many Palestinians have been willing to forgo certain political or ideological objections to Hamas in order to reap the benefits of social services.<sup>33</sup>

**Figure 6.3**



<sup>33</sup> Zeevi. "What Do Palestinians Really Want: The Social Implications of the Hamas Victory."

## **Hypothesis**

In light of the highly gendered nature of public opinion on defense and social spending in other contexts outlined in Chapter 2, I hypothesize that both Israeli and Palestinian women will be more supportive of social spending relative to men and less supportive of defense spending. However, because defense spending in the Israeli context is consistently presented as “security spending,” I might expect women to support it in higher numbers as high spending on security might mitigate their high levels of threat perception. On the Palestinian side, I would expect support of social spending to be particularly high among women given the crucial role it plays in the survival of their families.

## **Methodology**

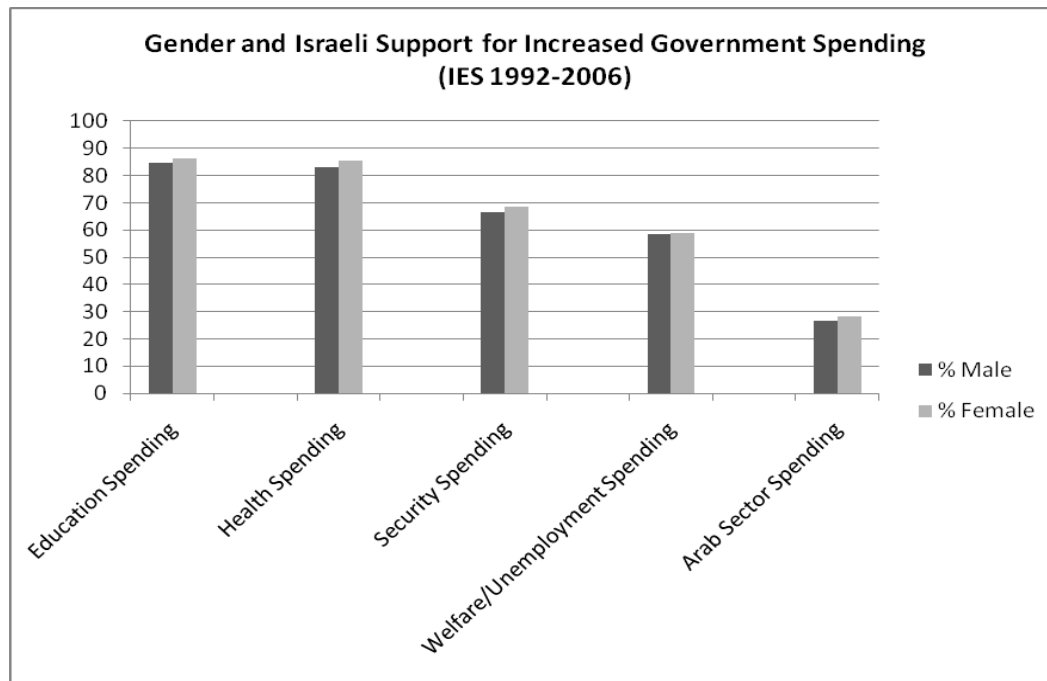
I tested the gendered nature of Israeli attitudes using survey data from the Israeli Election Studies between 1992 and 2006. At six different times in this period, Israelis were asked about their willingness to increase spending in a variety of different sectors. I examined questions that dealt with support for increased spending on welfare and unemployment, healthcare, education, the Arab sector, and security. By breaking down the responses to these survey questions by gender, I ascertain whether or not gender gaps exist either on social or defense spending in Israel.

While I did not have an easy empirical way of testing this hypothesis on the Palestinian side, I did examine gender differences in support for Hamas. As I described above, specifically around the election of 2006, Hamas gained much of its support from its provision of social services. I supplement this data analysis with qualitative evidence of the gendered nature of support for Hamas and social services in Palestine.

## **Israeli Results**

Interestingly, upon analyzing support for education, healthcare, security, welfare, and Arab sector spending, I did not find any statistically significant gender gaps. As Figure 6.4 demonstrates, while women generally support all spending at a slightly higher rate than men, these differences are very small.

**Figure 6.4**



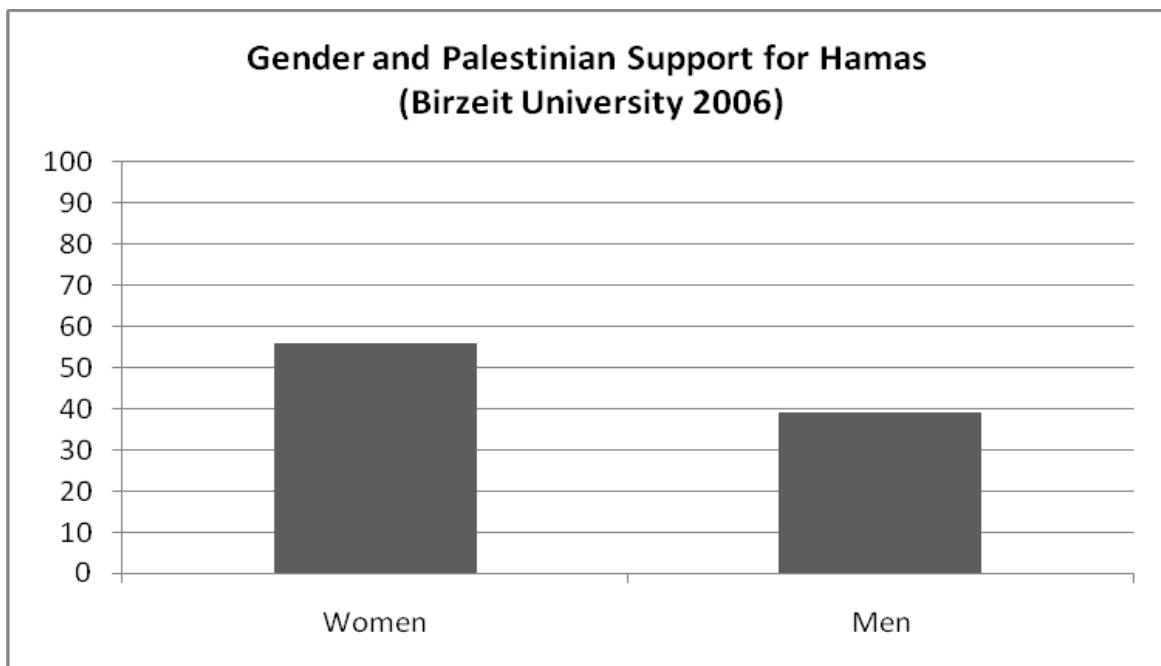
The lack of a gender gap on defense spending might be explained by the fact that the survey questions asked about “security spending.” As I hypothesized, this could tap into high levels of Israeli female threat perception and serve to balance out the normally lower levels of female support for defense spending. That being said, the fact that no significant gender gaps exists for education, health care, welfare, and Arab sector spending calls into question key assumptions about women and “compassion issues.” It is possible that female support for high levels of security spending tempers their desire to allocate funds to social services, but their support for security spending does not seem disproportionately high enough to warrant this.

Further investigation of Israeli male and female attitudes towards the provision of social services is necessary to fully understand this unique finding.

### **Palestinian Results**

As I hypothesized, women disproportionately support Hamas relative to men. This gender gap was especially prominent in the 2006 elections in which 56% of women supported Hamas compared to only 39% of men, a difference that is highly statistically significant. This finding is expressed in Figure 6.5 below.

**Figure 6.5**



In addition to this empirical data, there is a great deal of qualitative evidence supporting the hypothesis that women support Hamas disproportionately due to its effective provision of social services. For example, in the 2006 elections, Hamas had 13 female candidates running for Parliament. These women played a key role in getting out the female vote by promising support for female prisoners in Israel, support for disabled women, and jobs. As Hamas candidate Jamila

Shantay proclaimed in her campaign speech, “ Hamas will provide work for Palestinian women. We have lots of women who are well educated with graduate degrees and we’ll provide enough child care centers for your family.” She went on to remind voters about the education, healthcare, and other social services that Hamas had been providing in the Palestinian territories for years.<sup>34</sup> The fact that female Hamas candidates worked hard to mobilize female Palestinians to the polls by championing social services, and that women voted for Hamas in higher numbers than men, is a good indication women support “compassion issues” at high rates. However, it is important to remember that these compassion issues for many Palestinians are not simply a question of raising taxes. Instead, receiving sufficient social services is a matter of survival.

## **Conclusion**

Although the gender gap in female support for Hamas seems in line with past studies of female support for social spending, the absence of a gender gap in Israel on either security spending or social spending calls into question key assumptions regarding the relationship between gender and public spending. While the absence of a security spending gender gap may be partially attributable to high levels of threat perception, it does not adequately explain the relatively equal male and female attitudes towards spending in social sectors. The motivations behind these attitudes require further study. Furthermore, my study of Palestinian spending attitudes is somewhat incomplete due to a lack of data and the fact that the typical understanding of the breakdown of public spending does not necessarily apply in the Palestinian context. Therefore further investigation would be useful on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides. Public opinion on defense and social spending has important implications for policy decisions and the existence of a gender gap in support for public spending has long been part of the conventional

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<sup>34</sup> "NPR News: Women Play Role in Hamas Strength at Polls." National Public Radio. Web. 09 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.vpr.net/npr/5170707/>>.

wisdom on gender and politics. For this reason, gaining a better understanding of these trends in Israel and Palestine will be useful both in terms of advancing research on gender and international politics and understanding prospects for peace.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusions and Implications for the Peace Process**

Although past studies of gender differences in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion have noted an absence of a gender gap on issues of peace and security, my analysis of gender differences in attitudes towards threat perception, support for peace negotiations, the use of violence, and public spending contradicts this conclusion and demonstrates that it is both overly simplistic and overstated.

In Chapter 3, my examination of threat perception indicates that both Israeli and Palestinian women report higher levels of insecurity or fear of attack than men. On the Israeli side, this high level of threat perception appears to temper the female inclination to view “the enemy” more sympathetically and thus both men and women share equally negative views of Arab aspirations. This high level of female worry or insecurity in the Israeli-Palestinian context is in line with past findings of the gendered nature of threat perception in other countries. However, unlike studies in other nations, the significant degree to which threat perception shapes attitudes towards the peace process in the midst of such a violent conflict demonstrates the variable and context-specific nature of the relationship between gender and public opinion.

In Chapter 4, I demonstrate that contrary to past findings, the women and peace hypothesis does in fact apply in the Israeli-Palestinian context. Although I found a smaller gender gap in Israeli support for peaceful means of conflict resolution than those that have been observed in other international contexts, this can be attributed to the high levels of female threat perception established in Chapter 3. As my three way analysis of gender, fear of attack, and support for the peaceful conflict resolution indicates, respondents that report higher levels of worry are less supportive of the peace process. Furthermore, the gender gap in attitudes is much



greater among those respondents who report the lowest levels of worry, indicating that high levels of female threat perception limit the gender gap in support for peaceful means of conflict resolution in Israel. On the Palestinian side I observed a clear gender gap in support for peace negotiations with women consistently supporting the peace process at higher levels than men. Although I lacked the data to analyze the relationship between threat perception and support for peace in Palestine, it is possible the pattern observed in Israel might apply to Palestine as well, making the gender gap even greater.

Interestingly, in Chapter 5 I did not observe a gender gap in support for the use of violence in either Israel or Palestine. Although this finding is directly at odds with past studies of gender and attitudes towards the use of force, it may also be attributable to high levels of female threat perception. This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact that higher levels of threat perception are correlated with high Israeli support for harsher policies in the Palestinian territories. The relationship between gender and support for the violent use of force therefore warrants further investigation as it may not be as uniform as previously supposed.

Finally in Chapter 6 I found that there is no gender gap in Israeli attitudes towards defense and social spending—a result that starkly contradicts findings from other international contexts. Though the absence of a gender gap in attitudes towards defense spending might also be attributable to threat perception, this does not explain the absence of a gender gap in Israeli support for social spending. In contrast, on the Palestinian side, the gender gap in support for Hamas seems in line with past studies of female support for social spending. These unique results indicate the need for future research on support for public spending in conflict ridden nations.

These findings—most notably the influence of threat perception in shaping attitudes towards the use of force, the clear absence of a gender gap in support for violence, and the noteworthy lack of a gender difference in support for defense spending—call into question key assumptions about the gendered nature of public opinion. Women may frequently be more supportive of peaceful means of conflict resolution and less likely to support the violent use of force than men, but my results demonstrate this gender gap is far less uniform than previously supposed. In nations that face existential threats to their very survival, higher levels of female worry or fear may serve to temper or even eliminate the gender differences observed in many international contexts. As the complex nature of gender differences in Israeli-Palestinian public opinion indicates, further study of the country-specific factors that may shape the gender gap are vital. Such investigations will continue to provide important contributions to the study of gender and support for the use of force in a variety of disciplines.

### **Implications for the Peace Process**

As the brief overview of the Israeli-Palestinian women's peace movement in Chapter 1 demonstrates, women play a unique and important role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Although this phenomenon initially sparked my interest in studying gender differences in Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards the peace process, the implications of my research go beyond simply providing a logical justification for the emergence of a women's peace movement.

While gender differences in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion are by no means uniform, and women do not consistently demonstrate more conciliatory or “peaceful” attitudes than men, my findings nonetheless have important implications for the peace process. For example, the relationship between threat perception, support for peace negotiations, and support for the use of violence is critically important. As long as Israelis and Palestinians feel mutually

threatened and insecure, reaching effective compromise may remain a pipe dream and violence will likely continue.

The gendered nature of these attitudes is also important. The results in Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate that female Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards the peace process or the use of violence are especially conditioned by their heightened sense of threat perception relative to that of men. If women can be made to feel more secure, their attitudes towards the peace process may become increasingly conciliatory relative to men, and they may oppose the use of violence at even higher rates. These results indicate that taking a step back from issues of territorial compromise or rights to holy sites and working to improve the security situations in Israel and Palestine may be especially vital steps towards advancing the peace process.

As the results in Chapter 6 demonstrate, many Palestinian women support Hamas—a political party with an extremist and violent agenda— due to its effective provision of social services and perceived lack of corruption. Improving the provision of social services in the Palestinian territories might encourage women to support more moderate political parties that better reflect their attitudes towards peace negotiations. Electing more moderate politicians in Palestine could also have positive implications for the peace process.

Overall, while the gender gaps that I observed in Israeli and Palestinian attitudes do not indicate that women have universally “peaceful” attitudes, understanding the importance of threat perception and the potential of women to embrace more moderate positions is crucial in advancing the peace process. Achieving a viable solution to a protracted international conflict is no easy task, but addressing security concerns and increasing female participation in politics could ultimately lead to more effective negotiations and improve the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

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