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**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

**FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES
DE LA SOCIÉTÉ**

THE ROLE OF HATE IN POLICY SUPPORT

THE CASE OF ISRAELI JEWS WITHIN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

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Sandra PENIC**

THE ROLE OF HATE IN POLICY SUPPORT

“Never again”

- International slogan to remember the Holocaust victims and prevent future genocides

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INTRODUCTION

Emotions play a crucial role in shaping public attitudes and support for policies, especially in long-lasting intergroup conflicts (Halperin, 2015). Among these emotions, hate stands out as particularly powerful and destructive, deeply influencing how conflicts unfold and the chances for resolution. This paper examines the role of hate in policy support within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, focusing on how hate affects public opinion among the Israeli Jews, and how it is used by political leaders to foster their agendas and promote support for conflict-related attitudes.

In fact, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with its history of violence, collective trauma, and shared grievances, provides a unique lens to explore the connection between emotions and political attitudes. Hate functions as a persistent and deeply ingrained emotional sentiment, driving negative views of the opposing groups and encouraging support for conflict-promoting policies, such as measures of exclusion, control, or aggression. Using a mixed-methods approach, this paper combines quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative section analyzes survey data to explore the relationship between hate and support for conflict-related policies among Israeli Jews, offering insights into the emotional factors behind public opinion. The qualitative section examines speeches by Israeli authorities at the United Nations, revealing how hate is expressed, intensified, and leveraged in political discourse.

More in general, this study aims to investigate how hate operates beyond other emotions in the context of intractable conflicts and how it is intentionally used by political leaders to influence public attitudes and maintain divisions. This would help scholars and policy makers to understand better the role of hate as a tool for political mobilization, capable of shaping attitudes and fueling conflicts, while also highlighting the challenges that hate presents for peacebuilding efforts in deeply divided societies.

1. HATE IN INTERGROUP CONFLICTS

1.1. CHARACTERISTICS OF EMOTIONS IN SOCIAL SETTINGS

1.1.1. What is an emotion?

In order to understand how emotions, particularly hate, can influence policy support, it is important to define first what an emotion is and what we will consider as an emotion in this paper. In fact, the experience of emotion is multifaced and the definition of the concept can vary among the scholars depending on the characteristics considered in their analysis.

According to the work of Sander et al. (2018), emotions can be defined as a dynamic phenomenon that involves a complex set of psychological and physiological responses to significant events or stimuli, in particular the interaction of five elements: action tendencies, peripheral responses, motor expressions, subjective feelings, and appraisal.

On the physiological side, we call motor expression all the external expressions of emotions, which include facial expressions, body language, and vocal tone. As for the peripheral responses, we refer to the physiological changes that come with emotions, such as an increased heart rate, hormonal activity, or muscle tension. On the other side, as psychological response we consider as subjective feelings all the personal, internal experiences of the emotion, while action tendencies are all the impulses or motivations to act in certain ways that are associated with specific emotions, such as the urge to flee when experiencing fear or to confront when angry. The combination of all these aspects represents the overall emotional response to a certain event and that serve various functions, including signalling important information about the environment, guiding behaviour, and facilitating social interactions. However, the element that plays the most important role in determining the emotional

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response is the cognitive evaluation of the event, also referred to as appraisal, which can vary widely across different individuals and cultures (Sander et al, 2018).

In fact, the appraisal of a unique event doesn't only depend on the personal traits of the single individual, such as age, gender and individual personality, but it is also affected by cultural variations also play a significant role. In particular, the frequency and intensity of emotions can differ across cultures, as normally emotions that support or emphasize cultural norms and values are more common and intense than the ones that contradict or undermine these norms. For example, the cultures that value more independence and assertiveness tend to present more frequent and intense experiences of anger among the individuals that are part of that specific community, while this is not the case in cultures that prioritize interpersonal harmony (Mesquita, De Leersnyder & Boiger, 2016). Moreover, the meaning of emotions can also vary over time within the same community, as culture and values are not fixed and stable elements and may result in variations over a certain period of time.

Given the variable nature of emotions, they can be studied by different perspectives. However, as emotional reactions are perceived to be significantly tied to the social environment in which one person is integrated, one of the most common angles to analyse the study of emotions is the structural point of view, in particular in the field of sociology of emotions. This approach emphasizes the emotions that individuals experience due to their perceived structural conditions, meaning their status within a group, assuming that emotional responses not only depend on status but are also a signal of one's perceived social position (Lively & Weed, 2016). In fact, according to social interaction theory (Kemper, 1978), two of the most powerful aspects that govern social interactions are power and status, and when people feel appropriately treated according to their level of status or power, they feel satisfied and happy. On the other hand, if they perceive a loss of status this can lead to either embarrassment or anger depending on the event is appraised as a personal fault or due to another person's unjust behaviour. Moreover, stress researchers argue that people in lower classes and

disadvantaged positions are more prone to experience negative emotions than individuals that belong to more privileged positions (Simon, 2007).

However, as we will see in this chapter, emotional responses can be influenced by many other factors, including the characteristics of the individual's living context, their own personality or the presence of long-term affective traits or sentiments (Frijda, 1986). All these variables make it difficult for scholars to agree on a unique definition of the concept of emotions, even if there are often important elements of contact between the different approaches.

1.1.2. Moods, feelings and emotional sentiments

Even if scholars do not seem to agree on a stable definition of emotions, it is important to point out that different studies emphasise the difference between emotions and other types of affective response that individuals are able to show (Gross, 2007). Thus, one way of understanding more in detail what an emotion is to define what an emotion is not, which implies the need to distinguish between discrete emotions and other affective processes, such as moods, feelings, and general affect.

Moods tend to be much more enduring, possibly lasting for days, weeks or even months, whereas emotions typically persist for a relatively short period of time. Unlike emotions, which are tied to specific stimuli, such as a person or situation, moods are more diffuse and often lacking an identifiable cause. They represent a general sensation rather than a reaction to a particular event, and they are generally less intense and less specific than emotions. Additionally, according to Halperin (2015), another difference between moods and emotions is that the latter is intentional and directed at a specific object, such as a person, a group or an event (Frijda, 1994). Additionally, unlike emotions moods do not necessary involve particular physical reactions or expressions, and they are less influential in motivating actions.

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Concerning feelings, they also differ from emotions in both their nature and perception. In fact, a feeling is considered to be the subjective representation of how an emotion is privately experienced by an individual, rather than an emotion itself. Damasio (2004) explains that emotions are mental representations combined with bodily changes, while feelings are the awareness of these changes. Essentially, emotions have both a subjective and an observable aspect, whereas feelings are entirely subjective and private, and they can be defined as the conscious awareness and interpretation of these emotional and physical states.

Moods, feelings and emotions can all be considered as an affect, which is a broader all-encompassing term that refers to any experience of emotion and affective states, ranging from the mildest feeling to the most pathological emotional reaction, as described in the APA Dictionary of Psychology (2018). Taking into account these different concepts, emotions can thus be broadly described as short-term reactions to specific objects or events, that involve both physical and psychological expressions. According to the discrete emotion theories, there are a set of fundamental discrete emotions clearly distinct from one another, with specific boundaries and unique characteristics, that are recognizable and universally shared among all cultures, typically experienced in response to particular stimuli. Some of the most commonly recognized discrete emotions include for example happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise and disgust, as initially proposed by Ekman (1972). These emotions are often seen as fundamental or primary, each with its own unique set of facial expressions, bodily responses, and psychological experiences.

In addition, Halperin (2015) argues that in the context of long-term intractable conflicts, such as in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it's crucial to make the distinction not only between discrete emotions, moods and feelings, but most importantly between emotional reactions and emotional sentiments, as they are both key elements to determine the formation of attitudes and behaviours among people in this situation. In fact, emotional reactions depend on the individual's

long-term tendency to respond with particular emotions to any events, which is thought to be an emotion-specific process rather than the result of a general predisposition. On the contrary, emotions are normally linked to a specific person, object, event, or group, which is closer to the concept of emotional sentiments. Specifically, while discrete emotions are short-term, multi-component responses to specific events, emotional sentiments represent lasting configurations of these same emotions. As Ben-Zeev (1992) explains that the fundamental structure of these long-term emotions sentiments is the same as for immediate emotions, meaning that these enduring emotional sentiments can manifest as any discrete emotion. For example, someone might experience long-term fear of a particular, or lasting guilt over something happened in the past. Cognitively driven emotions like hatred or love are more likely to develop into emotional sentiments than other primary emotions that are normally tied to specific events, such as anger or humiliation, and these emotions are often referred to as secondary emotions (Halperin, 2015).

As demonstrated by further studies (Halperin et al., 2011; Halperin, 2011b; Halperin & Gross, 2011) these long-term emotional sentiments toward outgroups can shape the emotional reactions to a certain event by influencing the way in which the specific event is appraised. This concept can be considered an integration of the traditional theories of emotion appraisal (i.e. Lazarus, 1991) with the appraisal tendency framework proposed by Lerner and Keltner (2000), which will be analysed in greater detail later in the chapter.

1.1.3. Functions of emotions

Scholars have often viewed emotions as a maladaptive phenomenon, believing that they interfered with decision-making and led to irrational choices (Roberts, 2013). However, this perspective has evolved, and emotions are now increasingly seen as adaptive and functional. In fact, emotions can

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help individuals to address or overcome challenges, as we can see for example in the case of fear, that normally can activate the “fight or flight” mode enhancing vigilance and the ability to escape from potential threats (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). Moreover, emotions serve as valuable sources of information to understand the dynamics of the world around us, for instance signalling that something important requires attention, and they have a very important motivational function as they push individuals to take action. This is particularly relevant because, while the appraisal component helps us to understand how emotions are experienced and interpreted, it's the motivational part that actually determines how we react to certain stimuli.

In line with this understanding, as reported by Keltner et al (2019) , Scarantino's theory of affective pragmatics (2017) synthesizes research on emotion perception, suggesting that emotional expressions, such as facial and bodily expressions, communicate four types of information: the individual's current feelings (expressive function), the present context (declarative function), desired responses from others (imperative function), and intentions or plans for future actions (commissive function).

In particular, the expressive function refers to the expressions that provide others with insight into how the person is feeling at that moment, for example a smile or a frown that might respectively indicate happiness or sadness. This function is the most intuitive and widely recognized, as it directly links specific expressions to particular emotions.

The declarative function refers to the fact that emotional expressions might serve as cues that help others understand the surrounding environment or the current situation. For example, a person looking fearful might indicate that something dangerous is happening, or a look of disgust might suggest that something around the person is unpleasant.

The imperative function refers to the way emotional expressions can be used to activate specific responses on the other people, influencing or guiding social interactions in a desired direction. For

example, a distressed expression might induce someone to offer comfort or assistance, while an angry expression could be a way of asking to stop a certain behaviour.

Finally, the commissive function involves communicating intentions or future plans in order to help others predict future behaviours and actions, facilitating coordination and a deeper understanding of social interactions. For instance, a determined look might signal that someone is about to take on a challenge or engage in a difficult task, or in a similar way a person who appears fearful might be indicating that they intend to avoid something they perceive as a threat.

Some of these functions clearly show that emotions are not only important for our physical survival, as they help us adapt to changes in our surroundings and avoid potentially dangerous situations, but they also play an important social function because they influence how others react to us and how we connect with them, allowing us to better understand and shape our social environment and to avoid behaviour that would go against our social well-being, such as breaking social rules or feeling excluded (Fischer et al., 2003). For example, showing anger can help restore balance in a relationship, while smiling might make others feel empathy but can also indicate a lack of power.

As argued by Fischer & Manstead (2016), emotions can have different social functions, including affiliation and social distancing functions. The affiliation function refers to the fact that emotions play a crucial role in helping people to form and maintain close, long-term relationships. They promote connection and harmony, offering comfort and reducing social isolation. The closer the relationship, the more frequently and intensely emotions are experienced and expressed, with people often sharing their feelings primarily with family and friends. This affiliation function is not only promoted by constructive emotions, but it can also be expressed through negative emotions, which can also strengthen relationships by signalling the emotional state of the person expressing them, prompting support from others, or encouraging changes in behaviour that benefit the relationship. For example, showing embarrassment can lead others to respond with empathy, positive

evaluations, or helpful actions, if that particular emotion is seen as appropriate in that specific context. On the other hand, the social distancing function refers to the fact that emotions can also create distance between individuals, helping to establish or maintain social positions and preserve self-esteem, identity, or power, sometimes at the expense of others. By increasing social distance, these emotions can enhance one's social standing or self-perception. Such "socially disengaging" emotions, like contempt, or disgust, are often more acceptable or even valued in individualistic cultures.

1.1.4. Appraisal theories of emotions

Traditionally, emotions were considered to be a separate mechanism to cognitive processes, and that these two aspects could be sometimes conflicting or even contradictory. However, over the years several scholars have contributed to the conception of appraisal theories of emotions, which are based on the fundamentally different assumption that sees emotions to be the result of cognitive appraisals, or evaluations, of events in relation to an individual's goals, desires, and well-being (Sander et al., 2018). In fact, according to appraisal theories of emotions the way people react emotionally to events does not depend on the event itself, that has no inherent meaning per se, but rather on how these people personally interpret that specific event. Thus, a same event could trigger different emotional reactions in different because each person would perceive the event in their own different way.

Some of the most important authors that have contributed to these theories are for example Richard Lazarus (1991) and Klaus Scherer (2001). Richard Lazarus is considered a pioneer in the field and appraisal theory of emotion, and his theory posits that emotions arise from individuals' evaluations or appraisals of events in relation to their personal well-being and goals. According to this theory, the emotional experience begins with a primary appraisal, where individuals assess whether an event is relevant and significant to their goals, determining if it is positive, negative, or

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neutral. This is followed by a secondary appraisal, where individuals evaluate their ability to cope with the event, considering available resources and options. These cognitive appraisals lead to distinct emotional responses, which are specific for each discrete emotion. In particular, the theory emphasizes the dynamic interaction between cognition and emotion, highlighting how thought processes shape emotional experiences and responses.

As for Klaus Scherer's appraisal theory of emotion (2001), known as the Component Process Model (CPM), it emphasizes the role of sequential cognitive evaluations in generating emotions. According to Scherer, emotions result from a series of appraisals that assess various aspects of a situation in relation to an individual's goals, needs, and well-being. These appraisals include evaluating the novelty of the event, its intrinsic pleasantness, the relevance to one's goals, the potential for coping with the event, and the compatibility with social norms. Each appraisal step influences different components of emotion, such as subjective feelings, physiological responses, expressive behaviour, and action tendencies. Differently from Lazarus, Scherer's model highlights the complexity and multi-dimensionality of emotional processes, proposing that emotions are not single reactions, but rather dynamic and evolving responses shaped by ongoing cognitive evaluations.

Even if these frameworks can be considered very important milestones for emotion studies, more recent appraisal theories try to go beyond these concepts by focusing on the behavioural outcomes of emotions. For instance, this is the case of the Appraisal Tendency Framework developed by Lerner and Keltner's (2000), which explores how discrete emotions influence judgment and decision-making processes by triggering distinct cognitive appraisal tendencies that can also go beyond the immediate context. In this framework, each emotion is associated with distinct appraisal and cognitive patterns that give insights not only on how individuals perceive a situation, but also on how they would react if exposed to a new similar one. This emphasizes how emotions should not be

considered merely passive experiences, as they can actively influence how people evaluate information and make complex decisions.

This appraisal approach to emotions is particularly relevant when analysing emotions in conflict settings. In fact, as we will analyse more in detail later in the chapter, Halperin (2015) argues that a long exposure to violent events and conflicts can influence the cognitive appraisal of the events, meaning how people first interpret or evaluate the event in their minds. The result of this appraisal process influenced by this negative context can trigger specific emotions, such as fear, hatred, or anger, that can in turn influence the behaviour and political attitudes of the people that live in these contexts of long-term intractable conflicts.

1.1.5. Positive and negative emotions

As explained in the previous section, in most situations emotions involve a thorough evaluation of what triggered them, which can happen either consciously or unconsciously. This evaluation, or cognitive appraisal, assesses the situation along several dimensions, which can lead to different kinds of characterisation and categorisation of emotions. For example, as argued by scholars such as Smith & Ellsworth (1985) or Lerner et al. (2014), emotions can be differentiated by the degree of certainty (how predictable and understandable future events seem), pleasantness (the level of pleasure or displeasure one feels), attentional activity (much something captures or repels attention), control (assess how events seem driven by individual actions or external circumstances), anticipated effort (how much physical or mental effort seems required) or responsibility (whether someone else or oneself is seen as responsible for the outcome).

Among the various possibilities, as reported by Cohen-Chen et al. (2020), the two most common properties that are normally used to study and categorise emotions are valence, (how pleasant or

unpleasant an emotion is perceived by an individual), and arousal (degree of physiological activation), which are also the key features of the circumplex model proposed by [Russell \(1980\)](#). This means that in this form of categorisation, for instance, emotions such as anger and fear have a negative valence and are thus considered unpleasant or “negative”, while hope and pride would be categorised as “positive” pleasant emotions as they have a positive valence. However, different scholars have varied views on these properties, with different ideas about the number of dimensions and their labels.

Cohen-Chen et al. (2020) try to go beyond this simple distinction between positive and negative emotions by proposing an alternative model that takes also into account the behavioural tendencies associated with each emotion. In fact, according to the constructivist perspective ([Barrett, 2012](#)), an emotion can have positive behavioural outcomes that lead to some sort of advantages or constructive results for the person or their environment, such as pursuing goals or helping others. In contrast, emotions can also have negative behavioural outcomes, that cause harm or destructive effects, like aggression or withdrawal. However positive action tendencies (“do good”) are not always associated to emotions with a positive valence (“feel good”), nor negative behavioural tendencies (“do bad”) always correspond to emotions with a negative valence (“feel bad”). This is well visible in the framework proposed by Cohen-Chen et al (2020) and presented in Figure 1, that represents a categorization of emotions into four quadrants: "feel bad"—"do bad," "feel bad"—"do good," "feel good"—"do bad," and "feel good"—"do good."

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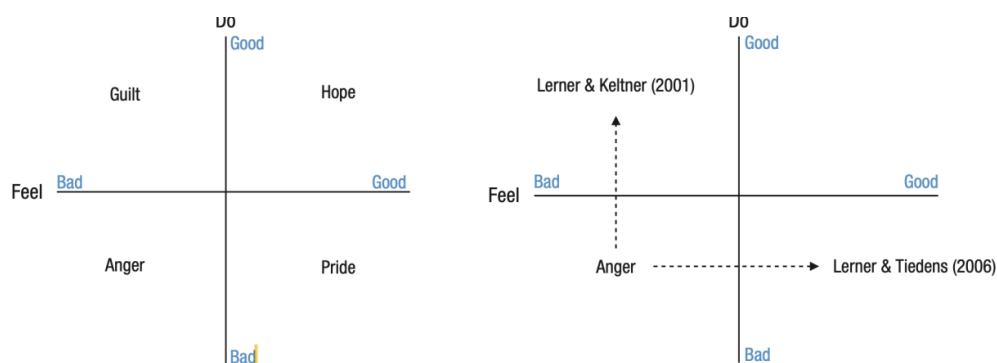


Fig. 1. Emotion categorization. Discrete emotions can be categorized along a circumplex comprising two dimensions: "feel good" versus "feel bad" and "do good" versus "do bad" (a). Various factors can influence where discrete emotions are placed (b). Even emotions that are traditionally "feel bad" and "do bad" can, under certain circumstances, be pleasant to the individual (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006) or bring about constructive outcomes (Lerner & Keltner, 2001).

Fig. 1 Emotions categorization according to Cohen-Chen et al. (2020)

While there is often an overlap between how an emotion feels and the behaviour it leads to, as in the case of hope ("feel good" – "do good") or anger ("feel bad" – "do bad"), we can clearly see that some emotions can also have surprising outcomes. For instance, pride feels good for the individual but can result in negative actions, such as diminishing other people ("feel good" – "do bad"). On the other hand, guilt, which normally feels bad for the individual, can both lead to positive behaviours such as striving toward goals or making amends ("feel bad" – "do good,").

These categories are flexible, as the context can influence where an emotion falls in terms of both how it feels and what behaviours it encourages. This is also in line with the perspective of Halperin (2015), who argues that two emotions with the same level of valence and arousal could potentially feel very different because of the context in which they occur, which has an important impact on the appraisal process. The differences in term of appraisal determine a variety of possible emotional responses that can lead to different, or even opposite, behavioural outcomes, which can also translate into different outcomes in terms of political support.

1.1.6. Emotions and social identification

As argued previously in the chapter, emotions not only have an important social function, but they can also be influenced by the social context in which they live in. The social context also includes the individual's social identification, as the definition of the person's ingroup(s) has a crucial impact in determining the appraisal of events.

In general, identity can be defined as the how individuals and groups distinguish and recognize themselves in social interactions with other groups or entities (Ellemers et al., 2002). However, this process is particularly complex, as studies show that people can maintain multiple identities at the same time, without one necessarily excluding the others (Levy, 2014).

The formation of individual identity is the result of the interaction between various elements and factors, and it can be both inclusive and exclusive. According to İnaç & Ünal (2013), this means that individuals internalize the common identifying elements of the group(s) they feel to belong to (ingroup), while also differentiating themselves from those who do not share these elements (outgroups). This need to distinguish between ingroup and outgroup, deciding what constitutes one's identity and excluding what does not align with that, can often lead to the non-recognition of others, potentially causing real harm to those who are seen as non-conforming and who may therefore face discrimination (Taylor, 1995).

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) provides a framework for understanding how our affiliations with various social groups shape people's identities and influence the interactions with others, also affecting behavioural outcomes and attitudes. According to this theory, a significant portion of a person's identity is derived from their membership in social groups, such as nationality, religion, social class, or any other collective with shared characteristics. A social group consists of people who perceive themselves as part of the same social category, sharing a strong emotional commitment to this shared identity, and agree collectively on the value of their group and their

membership in it. However, belonging to a group is not a one-sided process, as it is essential that individuals both see themselves as members and are recognized by others as such.

After identifying with a group, individuals tend to make social comparisons between their ingroup and outgroups, which often leads to ingroup favouritism. In fact, the ingroup to which one person belongs and show loyalty to, normally referred to with the inclusive “we/us”, is often perceived as having better characteristics than the outgroups, generally referred to with the pronouns “they/them”, which imply an exclusion from the ingroup. This dynamic can contribute to create a cognitive bias that may induce the members of an ingroup to hold prejudices or negative attitudes toward those in different groups, potentially causing outgroup discrimination.

1.1.7. Group-based emotions

Social identity theories can be integrated to the appraisal theories of emotions (i.e. Scherer, 2005) to offer a new perspective on people’s emotional reactions to events. In fact, as reported by Halperin (2015), it is believed that individuals might experience emotions indirectly through the experience of other members of their own ingroup when the event that triggers the emotional response involves the entire all or some members of the ingroup representatives (i.e. Branscombe, Slugoski, & Kappen, 2004; Lickel, Schmader, & Barquisau, 2004) even if the person is not directly involved.

These emotions that individuals experience as a result of their identification with a particular group are commonly known as group-based emotions. These emotions are not merely personal reactions but are influenced by the individual's perception of the group's situation, experiences, or actions. In fact, as argued by Halperin (2015) group-based emotions result from the combination of two main elements, specifically one’s level of identification with their own ingroup, and unique

appraisals of the triggering event, which is also influenced by the personalities, values, and interests of the ingroup members (Smith, 1993).

The level of identification with the ingroup is particularly important because people are able to experience group-based emotions only if they identify as part of the relevant group. The stronger identification with the ingroup, the more intense can be the feelings of group-based emotions, even if the individual is not personally involved in the event that is linked to the emotional response, like in the case of feelings of guilt for historical wrongdoings committed by one's nation in the past centuries. Thus, the level of group identification can be either amplifier or attenuate the feelings of group-based emotions depending on the personal perception of belonging of the individual within the ingroup.

These shared emotions can foster solidarity within the ingroup and influence behavioural outcomes, like participating in protests, voting or other forms of collective action. In fact, as argued by Halperin (2015), group-based emotions can play a significant role in intergroup relations, as positive emotions like pride can enhance ingroup cohesion, while negative emotions like anger or hatred towards outgroups can exacerbate conflicts.

1.2. ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN INTRACTABLE CONFLICTS

1.2.1. Psychological context of intractable conflicts

Halperin (2015) emphasizes the important role of the collective context in shaping the needs, goals, and challenges faced by members of a society, especially in the context of intractable conflicts. According to Bar-Tal (2013), conflict is defined as "a situation where two or more parties perceive their goals, intentions, and actions as mutually incompatible, and act based on this perception." In the specific case of intractable ingroup conflicts, they are particularly hard to solve because the nature of

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the disagreements is usually rooted and fuelled by deeply conflicting ideologies, issues or values that are perceived by the respective parties as sacred and impossible to compromise on. Halperin (2015) further argues that when examining the role of emotions in such situations it is important to consider the unique psychological implications of the conflict's context. As reported by Halperin, the psychological context of intractable conflicts as defined by Bar-Tal (2007) is characterised with several key features, specifically:

“(a) the conflicts are perceived as being about essential and even existential goals, needs, and/or values; (b) they are perceived as irresolvable; (c) they include an enduring and destructive element of mutual violence; (d) they are perceived as being of a zero sum nature; (e) they occupy a central place in the lives of individual society members and of society as a whole; (f) they demand extensive material (i.e., military, technological, and economic), educational, and psychological investment; and (g) they persist for a long period of time, that is, for at least one generation.” (Halperin, 2015, p. 8).

The collective setting of such conflicts is characterized by its durability, as these conflicts normally last for decades and involves various generations. During these prolonged periods, society members live under high levels of perceived threat and uncertainty, and many directly experience violence, suffering, and victimization. As a result, the continuous violent context of conflict has a deep and long-lasting impact on the well-being of society members, which significantly shapes their worldview. In fact, these conflict-related factors significantly influence the types of emotions people experience, the intensity of these emotions, and the regulatory processes they employ to manage their emotional experiences. This is also demonstrated by academic research that shows that individuals who live in such environments are often more competitive, exhibit less cognitive flexibility, engage in more "black-and-white" thinking, and become highly sensitive to threat cues (Halperin, 2015).

In particular, societies involved in long-term conflicts are characterised by a higher presence of negative or destructive emotions, such as hate, extreme anger, and fear, as they see the expression of

these emotions as more acceptable or even legitimate. In fact, these emotions are perceived as justified in light of the horrific events of the conflict, leading people to express them more freely and with less effort to downregulate them. The expression of these emotions can actually have a beneficial effect on the members of these societies because it can actually help individuals to cope with the psychological challenges of the conflict, however in other occasions these emotions can be used by political leaders as a powerful tool to mobilise the masses towards the support of aggressive conflict-promoting policies (Staub, 2005).

1.2.2. Appraisal - Group-based emotions as predictors of conflict-related attitudes.

As previously mentioned, appraisal is an important aspect to consider when analysing emotions in conflict situations, as the exposure to a violent context can influence the way in which individuals perceive and process events and emotional experiences. In fact, appraisal does not happen in a vacuum, but the process depends on the goals, interests, dispositions, personality and previous experiences of the person concerned.

Working in this sense, Halperin (2015) proposes a framework that highlights the role of four main factors that can influence the appraisal process in contexts of long-term conflicts. Specifically, the first aspect is that the way in which individuals appraise new events in conflict situations can be significantly influenced by their past experiences. Positive experiences, such as repeated interactions with outgroup members through friendships or structured dialogues, tend to result in a less severe appraisal of provocations from the outgroup (see Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Conversely, those who have suffered from violence, whether directly or indirectly, are often more sensitive to perceived threats. In fact, research conducted by Canetti et al. (2009) demonstrate

that these individuals may interpret even non-threatening stimuli as potential dangers, triggering more negative emotions that influence behavioural and political responses.

The second aspect is that the appraisal of an event is not solely based on affective factors, but also shaped by the psychological infrastructure that is proper to the societies to which they belong. For example, in societies dominated by a belief in collective victimhood, almost any action by the outgroup is likely to be perceived as threatening, leading to increased group-based fear.

The third aspect involves the fact that long-term emotional sentiments play a critical role in influencing cognitive appraisals. The appraisal tendency framework proposed by Lerner and Keltner (2000) suggests that pre-existing emotions predispose individuals to interpret new events in line with the emotions' original triggers. For instance, a society that has been under continuous external threat is more likely to be attuned to cues of danger, resulting in frequent fear responses, as discussed by Bar-Tal et al. (2007).

Lastly, it is important to mention the framing of events can be heavily influenced by leaders and media, as their way of communicating about an event can significantly affects the individual's appraisal of such event. Different narratives can lead to distinct emotional responses, even when the event itself remains unchanged. For example, Gross (2008) highlights how a military action framed as a defensive move might elicit fear or sadness, whereas framing it as an unjustified aggression could lead to anger or hate. This aspect will be crucial in the final chapter of this paper, where we will analyse the public speeches of Israeli government representatives regarding the conflict with Palestinians.

As suggested by Halperin (2015), it is important to consider these factors because the appraisal process result in the expression of discrete emotions that have the power to shape people's political reactions to specific events by translating the core emotional goals and action tendencies into support or opposition for relevant policies. This means that the same event can lead to different policy

preferences among individuals depending on the emotions they experience in response to the event. In order to understand the different implications of these emotions, in the following sections we will explore the main characteristics of six of the most commonly studied emotions found in contexts of intractable conflicts, which are known to influence the support to public policy measures: empathy, hope, guilt, anger, fear, and hate, with a particular focus on the latter. In general, hate, anger, and fear are considered negative emotions in terms of behavioural outcomes, as they promote the endurance of intergroup conflicts. In contrast, empathy, guilt, and hope are generally considered positive emotions in conflict settings because they tend to promote support for reconciliation policies that sustain the peace-making process. However, each of these emotions have distinct characteristics that can influence the support to conflict-related policies in different ways.

1.2.2.1. Empathy

Empathy is described as an "other-oriented cognitive and emotional response" that is congruent with the perceived welfare of someone in need (Halperin, 2015). Thus, empathy is the ability to understand, share, and care about the experiences and emotions of others, and it represents a key element in fostering positive social interactions and attitudes. It is often linked to positive outcomes, such as improved attitudes toward outgroup members and increased support for humanitarian policies (Dovidio et al., 2009; Brown & Cehajic, 2008). While empathy is normally considered a positive "feel-good, do-good" emotion, meaning that it's beneficial for both the person experiencing it and the behavioural outcomes it promotes, it also involves sharing in the suffering of others, which can potentially lead to emotional discomfort.

Empathy is not just a natural trait but a skill that can be developed and refined over time. The more we practice empathy, the better we become at it, and our ability to empathize can either grow

or diminish based on our experiences (Zaki, 2014). Knowing that empathy is a skill rather than an inherent trait encourages individuals to actively work on enhancing it. However, the expression of empathy is highly context dependent. For example, during intergroup conflicts, people tend to experience less empathy, particularly for members of rival groups (Cikara & Van Bavel, 2014). Similarly, professionals such as physicians may intentionally reduce their empathy to avoid emotional overwhelm, a phenomenon observed in research on medical practice (Marquié et al., 2003; Sloman et al., 2005). Social class also plays a significant role in the expression of empathy. Studies have shown that lower-class individuals tend to exhibit stronger compassion and greater empathic accuracy compared to upper-class individuals (Stellar et al., 2012). This difference is partially explained by the fact that lower-class individuals' life outcomes are more dependent on external social forces, making them more attuned to the needs and emotions of others in their social environments (Kraus & Keltner, 2009).

Feelings of empathy are normally associated to numerous benefits in terms of behavioural outcomes. In fact, empathy enhances helping behaviours and cooperation (Batson & Ahmad, 2001) and is associated with adaptive outcomes such as increased emotional well-being, greater social connectedness, and better health (Morelli et al., 2015; Kardos et al., 2017). Additionally, empathy facilitates successful negotiations, making it a valuable tool in both personal and intergroup interactions. Intergroup empathy, in particular, is often viewed as a vital goal in peacebuilding efforts, as it can significantly improve intergroup relations and contribute to sustainable peace. Research has shown that intergroup empathy is linked to support for reparation policies, forgiveness of other communities, and opposition to aggressive policies in conflict zones like Bosnia, Northern Ireland, and Israel (Brown & Čehajić, 2008; Moeschberger et al., 2005; Rosler et al., 2016). As a result, many conflict resolution interventions focus on promoting intergroup empathy through methods such as intergroup contact, dialogue, and peace education.

1.2.2.2. Guilt

As discussed by Weiss-Klayman et al. (2019), group-based guilt normally arises when some or all members of one's ingroup commit a wrongdoing or an harmful action that is perceived as illegitimate towards the outgroup (Branscombe, Doosje, & McGarty, 2002). One key predictor of this emotion is the acknowledgment of in-group responsibility, but this could be sometimes denied by the group members in order to protect their positive group image (Čehajić-Clancy & Brown, 2008).

Although guilt is rather unpleasant for the individual to experience, it can actually lead to positive behavioural outcomes and political attitudes, placing it in the quadrant of “feel bad, do good” emotion”. In fact, some studies confirm that acknowledging the in-group's wrongdoings can motivate support for reparation policies (Brown et al., 2008; Wohl, Branscombe & Klar, 2006). In particular, when considering its action tendencies, group-based guilt has been shown to promote support for reparations toward victimized groups (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011) and increase support for apologies for moral transgressions (Čehajić-Clancy, 2015).

Given these characteristics of guilt, it is argued that individuals who believe that groups are malleable (incremental theorists) are more likely to feel guilt than those who view groups as fixed (entity theorists) because incremental theorists perceive situations as opportunities for change and are thus more willing to accept responsibility (Weiss-Klayman et al., 2020). Thus, the level of guilt experienced by each member of the ingroup may vary a lot depending on the personal perspective of the single individual, assuming that conservative people who are less prone to change would be less likely to accept the responsibility for the ingroup's negative actions and feel a lower level of ingroup guilt.

1.2.2.3. Hope

Hope is a future-oriented emotion that plays a significant role in conflict resolution by encouraging the search for new and creative solutions and fostering support for political compromise (Cohen-Chen et al., 2014a, 2014b). It is considered a "feel good, do good" emotion that generates both positive feelings for the individual experiencing it and positive behavioural outcomes.

As a secondary, highly cognitively-based emotion, hope involves expectations and aspirations for a positive future goal, along with positive feelings about the anticipated outcome, enhancing goal setting, planning, creative thinking, and cognitive flexibility. This makes hope a powerful emotional sentiment to promote conflict resolution, as it enables those involved in violent conflicts to believe in the possibility of a peaceful resolution and imagine a possible better future, which is crucial for taking risks and make the necessary effort to find new adapted solutions for compromise and potential peace (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006).

In terms of political outcomes, hope has been linked to attitudes that are fundamental to reach peace in conflict situations, in particular with an increased support for humanitarian aid policies (Halperin & Gross, 2011), a decreased desire for retaliation, and an increased willingness to forgive the enemy. Recent studies have also shown empirically that induced hope can predict support for compromise actions in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, & Gross, 2014). However, while there is evidence that hope can influence political attitudes in intergroup conflicts, its direct association with behaviour, particularly in terms of information processing, remains underexplored.

1.2.2.4. Anger

Anger plays a central role in many intractable conflicts, serving as a powerful negative emotion that significantly influences emotional reactions and subsequent behaviour. It arises from the perception that the actions of others are unjust and deviate from acceptable norms, often leading to support for confrontational and aggressive policies (Berkowitz, 1989; Frijda, 1986). Anger is typically seen as a "feel bad, do bad" emotion, as it is not only unpleasant for the person experiencing it but also tends to result in negative behavioural outcomes. However, as also reported by Laoutides (2024), recent studies have explored the potential positive outcomes of anger in the context of intractable conflicts (i.e. Halperin et al., 2011).

Anger derives from the perceptions of an unjust and unfair behaviour perpetrated by the other (individual or group) which deviates from what is socially acceptable in a determined context. Research on intergroup relations has shown that group-based anger directed toward an outgroup can be a key element to predict support to aggressive political actions or policies (Lerner et al., 2003), it is linked to a greater willingness to engage in risky behaviour (Lerner & Keltner, 2001), and it generally diminishes the motivation to participate in peace processes. Further evidence of anger's role in conflict can be seen in studies of intractable conflicts in regions like Israel, Bosnia, and Kosovo, where intergroup anger has been identified as a strong motivator for collective violence (Halperin, 2011c; Spanovic et al., 2010). When intergroup anger is rooted in perceptions of unjust and unfair behaviour by the out-group, it diminishes the motivation to participate in peace processes.

Nevertheless, despite its generally destructive role, some scholars suggests that one functional consequence of anger could be restoration. For example, in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Halperin, Russell et al. (2011) found a correlation between low levels of hate and anger that supports compromise, providing evidence that anger can have a positive effect in promoting conflict-resolution policies, but only when the level of hate is low.

1.2.2.5. Fear

Fear is an emotion that emerges in response to perceived threats or danger, often leading to either withdrawal or increased aggression. It is typically associated with a sense of powerlessness and low control over the situation, triggering the typical “fight or flight” mode that naturally aims to enhance survival chances in dangerous circumstances either by avoiding the object of fear or attacking back, generally motivating protective behaviour (Cohen-Chen et al, 2014b).

In the context of intractable conflicts, fear it can be considered a "feel bad, do bad" emotion, as it not only causes distress for the individual experiencing it, but also tends to result in negative behavioural outcomes that go against the peace-making processes. In fact, high levels of fear can drive individuals to act aggressively, even when such aggression is unlikely to result in a positive outcome for the ingroup (Lazarus, 1991). Fear can also heighten sensitivity to threatening cues, leading individuals to emphasize information about potential threats and to overestimate the dangers they face (Bar-Tal, 2013). This heightened perception of threat often exacerbates the negative impact of fear on both individual and group behaviour, further complicating efforts toward peaceful resolution in conflict situations.

In terms of political action, feelings of fear are associated to increased support for security policies that foster the protection of the ingroup from the treat represented by the outgroup (Haner et al., 2019). Moreover, fear presents various similarity with the typical characteristics of group-based anger. In fact, just like anger, fear also tends to strengthen in-group ties, reinforce risk-averse political tendencies, and generate resistance to intergroup negotiations (Cohen-Chen et al, 2014b).

1.3. HATE

1.3.1. Defining hate

Most scholars who have explored the topic of hate agree that it is a powerful, intense and destructive emotional phenomenon, even though not all would classify it strictly as an emotion. According to the division of Cohen-Chen (2020) it can be considered an emotion that both feels bad and do bad, meaning that it can be considered a negative emotion both from a personal feeling and behavioural outcome point of view.

As reported by Fischer et al. (2018), hate is generally thought to arise when someone is mistreated or humiliated by others, or when someone perceives that another's deliberate actions are obstructing their goals. However, hate shares a lot of similarities with other negative emotions, particularly anger, contempt, and moral disgust, and the boundaries with these other emotions can be blurred and difficult to define because hate is often accompanied by other negative feelings. For instance, people might report feelings of hate when an event contradicts their goals and interests, which is a common trigger for all negative emotions, or when they perceive another's behaviour as unjust or unfair (typical of anger), morally inferior (typical of contempt), or morally repugnant (a key feature of disgust).

However, hate can be distinguished from other negative emotions by analysing the differences in terms of appraisal patterns, action tendencies and motivational goals. For example, in terms of appraisals, hate is distinct from anger because, with anger, the target is viewed as an individual or a group whose behaviour can be influenced or changed, while the target of hate is perceived as having an innate malevolent nature which cannot be modified. In other words, hate involves a stable perception of a person or group as possessing inherently negative traits, and the target has no possibility to make amends because any momentary "improvement" will not be perceived as lasting

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or genuine. In fact, in the case of hate appraisals are directed at the very essence of the hate target rather than specific actions performed by that target, therefore a change in actions will not alter the intensity of the feelings of hate. This perception also contributes to feelings of powerlessness, often reported as a key factor in the development of hate, which can be reinforced by the belief that the hate target is dangerous and capable of carrying out their malicious intentions at any moment.

According to Halperin (2015) hate plays a significant role in intractable conflicts because it is normally deeply ingrained in the individuals and groups involved in the conflict, and its intense and unchangeable nature can contribute to perpetuate disputes over time. In fact, as previously mentioned, hateful value judgments normally target the core nature of the outgroup, viewing their members as inherently evil without any possibility of change. This normally results in a lasting negative assessment of the outgroup, which is associated to will expel, eradicate or completely destroy the perceived enemy, hence fostering support for public policies with similar objectives.

In particular, it is possible to recognize two distinct types of hate, as it can manifest as both an immediate emotion and a chronic emotional sentiment. The first type, the immediate hate, presents the general features of a standard discrete emotion, as it appears as an intense, "burning" feeling of hate, which arises suddenly in response to dramatic events. This prompts harsh judgments about the outgroup and a strong desire to destroy them, often accompanied by physical symptoms and feelings of helplessness and revenge, other than the intent to harm or eliminate the group. Hate can however persist even long after an incident, taking a different form than a short-term emotional reaction, which can be referred to as chronic hate. This second type of hate manifests in the form of a stable and long-lasting emotional sentiment that involves persistent negative feelings and the belief that the outgroup is intentionally and repeatedly harmful. The perceived irremediable evil nature of the outgroup normally leads to a desire for complete separation, while simultaneously strengthening the bonds within the ingroup that is perceived as an innocent victim.

Frequent incident can cause the repeated experiences of immediate hate to transform into chronic hate, which, in turn, creates a fertile environment where to occurrences of immediate hate are felt even more often. In fact, people that experience chronic hate tend to see any behaviour of the outgroup as expressions of their malevolence, even in case of minor issues, to the point where the mere existence, mention or memory of anything related to the outgroup trigger a burning feeling of immediate hate. The passage from the first experience of immediate hate and the instauration of a stable chronic hate is a rather long process and takes time to evolve, even because Halperin demonstrated that the short-term hate triggered by violent events can be subsequentially reassessed by individuals and transform into other types of emotions, such as anger or frustration. However, once hate is well established as a long-term emotional sentiment it is extremely difficult to dissipate, hence reducing the chances to create the proper environments for peace negotiations and conflict resolution.

In particular, research conducted by Halperin (2011b) in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict found that hate constituted a major obstacle in attempts to acquire positive knowledge about the Palestinians, as this emotion make people perceive the outgroup as irremediably evil. Moreover, hate was the only emotion among the ones studied that reduced support for both symbolic compromise and reconciliation, further proving that hate may constitute a major emotional barrier to the peace process.

1.3.2. Mobilization of Hate

As argued by Halperin (2015), another particularity of hate as an emotion is that it does not arise in a vacuum, and it is rarely a spontaneous phenomenon. Instead, it can often deliberately mobilized and amplified by political actors seeking to achieve specific objectives. These actors exploit existing

divisions within society, such as ethnic, religious, or ideological differences, to incite hostility and deepen polarization. This process is often carried out using media platforms, public speeches, or social networks, where hate can be weaponized to foster support to specific policies, distract from broader issues, or marginalize opposing groups.

Understanding this dynamic is essential for addressing the root causes of societal conflict, which can often be related to identity matters. In fact, according to Brown (2000), determining the specific circumstances under which groups become hostile toward one another is one of the most important tasks of social identity researchers, putting a particular emphasis on the importance of understanding how identity processes contribute to the creation and spread of beliefs that justify treating outgroup members unfairly or support inequality.

In line with this, Reicher et al. (2008) developed a framework that aims to reveal how belief systems that foster hate (and therefore hostility) toward outgroups are deeply tied to the ways we construct both the social identity (or identities) of our own ingroup, and the one(s) of the outgroup(s). To illustrate this, they outline five stages in the formation of social identities that can lead to extreme acts of hostility and inhuman actions, in particular:

“(i) the creation of a cohesive ingroup through shared social identification; (ii) the exclusion of specific populations from the ingroup; (iii) the constituting of the outgroup as a danger to the existence of the ingroup; (iv) the representation of the ingroup as uniquely virtuous; and (v) the celebration of outgroup annihilation as the defence of (ingroup) virtue” (Reicher et al, 2008, p. 1326)

According to the researchers, the first four steps of this framework can be grouped into two pairs: on one hand ingroup definition and outgroup exclusion, and on the other hand outgroup threat and ingroup virtue. All these elements put together allow to create a setting for the fifth and final step of their framework, which is celebrating hatred and evil behaviour.

1.3.2.1. Definition & exclusion: ingroup identification through collective trauma

In contrast with other scholars in the field, Reicher et al. (2008) argue that the process that generates hatred towards an outgroup is not just determined by the way the outgroup is portrayed, but most importantly by the way in which the ingroup is defined. In particular, they suggest that the idea of "them" and what we think and feel about the actions of an outgroup actually depend on the set of characteristics that define "us" and the values that we perceive as inherent to the ingroup.

In fact, according to the social identity tradition, in particular to the self-categorization theory (Turner, 1982) a shared sense of belonging to a given category functions as psychological basis for group action. This means that when we perceive ourselves as part of a group, we tend to act according to the norms, beliefs, and ideas that are tied to that group identity, while also expecting the other members of the ingroup to act in the same way. Sharing a social identity helps people to find agreement and common ground by building trust, respect, and cooperation among those who are part of the same group, encouraging mutual support and acts of solidarity. This also contributes to make organization and leadership possible, as sharing common identity allows people to work together more effectively, giving them the strength to overcome challenges and achieve their goals and giving a general sense of empowerment.

Through these mechanisms, our group identity shapes the way we think, the emotions we feel, and the behaviours we put into action, focusing our main attention on the norms, values, and interests of our own ingroup. In other words, the characteristics of the ingroup are established as main perspective and term of comparison through which we view, judge, and respond to others based on whether they are part of our group (ingroup) or not (outgroup). When interacting with people outside our group, the focus is often on the differences between groups, particularly those that make our group look better.

Building on this theoretical perspective, Uluğ, Ünal & Bilgen (2021) in their analysis of group identity dynamics in the context of the People's Protection Units (YPG) supporters in Kurdistan put particular emphasis on the role of politicized collective identities in conflict areas, which can be considered particularly relevant in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In fact, according to them politicized collective identities provide an interesting social-psychological perspective to understand what motivates group members to action within a certain political context. The researchers argue that this identity is built on three key elements: 1) shared grievances that bring group members together around common experiences of injustice or dissatisfaction, 2) the identification of a common enemy held responsible for the group's problems, and 3) the search for third-party allies who can support their cause.

In this process, groups strengthen their unity by designating the other group as the focus of their actions. The shared recognition among group members that their grievances are collective and not individual is fundamental to create a sense of common injustice that mobilize action.

In fact, as explained by Hirschberger (2018) collective trauma may actually help the ingroup to construct a collective meaning. Collective trauma is a deeply impactful event that disrupts not only individual lives but also the structure of society as a whole, causing a deep crisis of meaning as people struggle to make sense of the loss. Similar to personal trauma, collective trauma changes how survivors view the world and their relationships with others, often reshaping their identity and group dynamics across generations. While the memory of such events can help ensure group survival, it also heightens feelings of vulnerability, prompting a search for meaning and the formation of a shared narrative. This narrative can shape a group's perceived sense of identity (Canetti et al., 2018), providing a sense of purpose, values, and direction for the future (Bar-Tal and Antebi, 1992). Therefore, by integrating all these elements, collective trauma can play a role in creating a stronger sense of social cohesion and collective worth. According to Hirschberger (2018), over time collective

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trauma can also become a core part of a group's identity, shaping how its members perceive and interpret the social environment around them.

The element of shared grievances to foster cohesion is particularly important in the context of Isreal, as Jewish people have historically been marginalized and persecuted in various forms and intensities across different regions and time periods, with the most traumatic and recent experience being the Holocaust (1933-1945), during which around six million Jews were brutally murdered by the Nazis. The historical need for a “safe haven” after centuries of persecution, including the Holocaust, is in fact deeply rooted in Zionism, the movement for Jewish self-determination and the establishment of a Jewish homeland that started the re-settlements of Jewish people in the Palestinian area during the 19th and 20th century and culminated with the creation of the modern state of Isreal in 1948.

Zionism strengthens the idea that Jewish survival depends on maintaining control over the land of Israel, which can make Palestinian aspirations for statehood or equality seem like a threat. This situation fosters the exclusion of Palestinians by prioritizing Jewish identity and claims to the land, which includes promoting aggressive or discriminating policies, such as expanding Jewish settlements or emphasizing Israel's identity as a Jewish state, that often marginalize Palestinians and limit their rights. As explained by Reicher et al. (2008) this is a typical sign of outgroup exclusion, as being defined as an outsider often excludes individuals from both political and civil society, depriving them of rights such as voting and limiting their ability to represent community organizations. This exclusion strengthens discrimination because it denies the out-group members (Arab Palestinians) the privileges that the in-group (Israeli Jews) can enjoy.

Moreover, unlike other political parties in Isreal, Likud uses the Jewish religion and identity in their rhetoric as a strategy of exclusion, not only to draw boundaries of nationhood that exclude non-Jewish citizens, but also to create hierarchies of loyalty within the Jewish nation (Porat & Filc, 2020).

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This is also useful to mark a sharp distinction between the Jewish people, represented as a closed and united ethno-national entity, and their threatening opponents, such as foreign enemies and non-Jewish citizens. These enemies would also include the Jewish-Israelis supporting equal citizenship rights, who are portrayed as disconnected elites lacking loyalty to Jewish identity and the Jewish State.

This kind of attitude is typical of far-right parties, as they are normally very attached to the concept of nativism, which is defined by Mudde (2007) as “an ideology which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that non-native elements (person and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state” (Mudde, 2007, p. 19). Mudde further adds that the criteria to define this non-nativeness always includes a cultural component, for example ethnicity, race or religion. In the case of Israel, we can argue that the Jewish identity represents a perfect combination of these elements, as being a Jew has both ethnic and religious connotations, other than political.

Porat & Filc (2020) further explain how Netanyahu clearly expresses this form of exclusionary populism in his speeches:

In his discourse, the identity of the people is crystal clear: “us,” implies the Jewish people, defined by descent, against the anti-people marked by antisemitism. In order to characterize the “anti-people,” Netanyahu builds a chain of equivalences in which the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Levant (ISIS) is like Iran, Iran is like Hezbollah, Hezbollah is like Hamas, Hamas is like Abu Mazen and the Palestinian Authority and all the Palestinians in the OT, the Palestinians in the OT are like the Israeli Arab citizens, and the Israeli Arab citizens are like the Israeli left, their loyalty to state and nation suspected (Porat & Filc, 2020, p.74)

This parallelism between the Palestinians and the supporters of Islamic terrorist organisations is persistent in the rhetoric of Netanyahu and Likud representatives, culminating with the general idea that any Palestinian state would be a base for terrorism and pose an existential threat to Israel, which will be explored more in detail in the following sessions. This has served to further justify the aggressive hawkish security measures implemented by Netanyahu’s government, that has

consistently supported a strong military control of Israeli authorities over the Palestinian territories to prevent security risks. Likud views military strength as essential to ensuring Israel's survival in a hostile environment, with Netanyahu frequently emphasizing that peace can only be achieved from a position of military strengths, including maintaining robust intelligence capabilities, conducting targeted military operations when necessary, and fortifying Israeli borders.

1.3.2.2. Outgroup threat and ingroup virtue through collective victimhood

While excluding certain groups is an important step toward fostering hatred and even genocide, it is not enough on its own, as we will see analysing the following elements of Reicher's framework (2008). In fact, once the ingroup has been identified and the outgroup has been excluded, the third step that progressively leads to hatred and hostility towards an outgroup is to consider them as a threat, as an entity that fundamentally endangers the ingroup existence and identity.

In order to achieve this, one common strategy is to shed a very positive light on the ingroup by highlighting all their virtues, while blaming the outgroup for all negative aspects and delegitimizing their actions. In this way, the outgroup is depicted as the main cause for all the ingroup's problems, not only for their actions, but for their inherent characteristics as a group.

Reicher (2008, p. 1331) conceptualise outgroup threat as "the belief that outgroups, by their actions or their mere presence, endanger the social being of ingroup members (i.e., their ability to exist as a group)". He argues that there are three important elements to consider in this regard. First, what counts as a threat depends on what the ingroup sees as essential to its identity. This might be economic concerns or cultural factors, like the belief that "they" endanger "our values" or "our way of life." Second, groups strive to live according to their shared values and beliefs, and succeeding in this brings pride, while failure causes frustration and negativity. If an outgroup is seen as a reason for

this failure, it can lead to hostility, not because of who the outgroup inherently is, but because they are perceived as undermining the ingroup's identity. Finally, hate-filled narratives often exaggerate this threat using metaphors to portray the outgroup as inherently destructive.

This is reflected in two common forms of hate discourse, including images of sexual danger or animalistic trait to dehumanize the outgroup. In particular, the first form focuses on sex and sexuality, portraying outgroup members as hypersexual and dangerous. For example, outgroup men are often depicted as sexually aggressive or predatory, while outgroup women are characterized as seductive and immoral. These depictions create a stark contrast with the supposed innocence or purity of the ingroup, making rape a powerful metaphor for the violation, corruption, and moral defilement of the ingroup's people and culture. These sexualized stereotypes amplify fears and hostility, presenting the outgroup as a direct threat to the moral fabric of the ingroup. On the other hand, the second form of hate discourse involves the use of animal metaphors and imagery as a way to dehumanizes outgroup members, likening them to animals to make them seem fundamentally different and inferior. However, even in these cases the animal metaphors used are not random, as they are often chosen to evoke specific associations of danger, filth, or destruction, reinforcing the idea that the outgroup poses a natural and uncontrollable threat to the ingroup's survival. This framing intensifies the perception of outgroup members as enemies who must be contained or eliminated for the ingroup's self-preservation.

These ideas work together to justify hostility towards an outgroup by framing it as an act of self-defense rather than aggression, portraying the ingroup as a victim of the immoral outgroup actions. In the context of intergroup conflicts it is normal that at least one group perceives itself as the victim, but as argued by Bar-Tal et al. (2009) this sense of victimhood becomes even more deeply embedded in the group's collective narrative and memory during prolonged intractable conflicts, such as the one between Isreal and Palestina. In fact, studies have shown that collective victimhood plays a significant

role in shaping the mindset of societies involved in long intractable conflicts, considering victimhood as one of the most common shared beliefs that is used to justify wars (Markiewicz & Sharvit, 2021). This is possible because this sense of collective victimhood reflects a strong belief that the outgroup has repeatedly acted unjustly and immorally, making them an ideal scapegoat for the ingroup's suffering and offering a justification for the ingroup's hostile goals and actions. According to Bar-Tal et al. (2009), collective victimhood may actually serve several purposes in intergroup conflicts. Specifically, as already mentioned, it can help to explain the ingroup's collective struggle, often derived by collective historical trauma, by providing a meaningful narrative about the conflict that frames the ingroup as a victim and justifies violent actions as necessary to prevent further harm. This also strengthens the ingroup unity and shared identity by focusing on shared threats, encouraging patriotism and motivating action, which makes political leaders to often use this victimisation strategy to gain public support and prepare the ingroup to endure hardships by emphasizing resilience.

Moreover, collective victimhood is seen as functional to gain sympathy and support from the international community. Because of this, as reported by Markiewicz & Sharvit (2021), some state actors may see victimhood as a valuable resource and actively seek to "gain" the status of victim in order improve their social standing and public image, constantly trying to position themselves as more harmed than their adversaries. In the context of Israel, this strategy can be particularly powerful to gain international sympathy and support, as most western countries still feel collective guilt to have enabled the tragic consequences of the Holocaust during World War 2 by positioning themselves in what Primo Levi (1986) defines as "grey zone" even if they were not the direct perpetrators.

Another important function of collective victimhood according to Bar-Tal et al. (2009) is that it highlights the group's moral superiority by portraying the opposing side as cruel and the ingroup as virtuous. This is also in line with the fourth step of Reicher's framework (2008), which consist in representing the ingroup as uniquely good, and the outgroup as uniquely evil by nature. In fact, when

the outgroup is portrayed as inherently sinful, this emphasis on ingroup virtue heightens the perception of the outgroup as a serious threat, while also justifying further the idea that the only way to defend the ingroup is to remove this threat, even to the extent of eliminating the outgroup entirely. Paradoxically, emphasizing the ingroup's virtue not only encourages feelings of hate towards an outgroup but also intensifies and radicalizes them, as the more a characteristic of the ingroup is highlighted, the more the outgroup is excluded for being outside of acceptable boundaries. In fact, as mentioned by Reicher et al (2008, p. 1334), it is notable how often those who commit the most extreme acts of brutality are also the ones who strongly promote the idea of their group's moral superiority.

1.3.2.3. Celebrating inhumanity as the defence of virtue

According to Reicher and al. (2008) depicting the ingroup as uniquely good and the outgroup as uniquely bad is not enough to make hatred and genocide to seem noble or worth celebrating. To do that, one more step is needed, which is portraying the defeat of the evil outgroup as a matter of preserving virtue. If we put all previously analysed elements together, we can perceive that when "they" are viewed as outsiders opposing "us", and we develop a black-and-white view of the world in which we are part of a battle of good (us) versus evil (them), the annihilation of the outgroup can be justified as an act of preserving and defending all that is moral and virtuous, including the ingroup.

As we have seen above, this in line with the elements that constitute the emotion of hate is closely related to this, as the object of hate is normally seen as causing harm on purpose because of their intrinsic evil nature that cannot be changed. As this evilness is seen as something unchangeable, eliminating the object of hate might seem the only possibility to stop the suffering.

In order to understand this mechanism further, it is important to recognise that the moral aspect is crucial to achieve all steps that allow hatred, violence and genocide to be framed as something to

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support (Fischer et al., 2018) or even to celebrate. For instance, as argued by Koonz (2003), even the appeal of the Nazi ideology was based on the fact that it was presented as a moral mission focused on rebuilding community, fostering solidarity and promoting selfless service, therefore those who worked hardest to eliminate the so-called "enemies of the people" to reach the supremacy of the Arian community were celebrated as the most virtuous and heroic individuals. In fact, in this framework every attack towards the outgroup is considered self-defence, and self-defence becomes a moral imperative, as preventing the evil outgroup from harming their victims corresponds to saving the "good" people from the "bad" people, even when it involves the total destruction of the outgroup. This can be easily seen as something to praise, as the ingroup members starts perceiving themselves as the protectors of virtue.

Examples of this strategies to promote hatred to justify and praise hostility can often be found in the discourse of the political actors that profit from conflicts to maintain the power and gain public support. This is why the analysis of public speeches from the governing authorities is one of the most direct ways to determine whether the political elites are working towards conflict resolution or not.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPHOTESIS

As suggested by Halperin (2015) the emotion of hate can become particularly harmful in the context of intergroup relations because of the violence it fosters. Research has shown that in prolonged intergroup conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, hatred exacerbates the situation beyond the impact of other negative emotions, diminishing people's willingness to make compromises necessary for conflict resolution (Halperin, 2011b) while encouraging aggressive actions against the relevant outgroup (Maoz & McCauley, 2008). Thus, hate can be considered a significant contributor to the escalation and persistence of intractable conflicts, acting as an insidious obstacle to conflict resolution. Yet, scientific research about the specific role of hate in shaping public support to conflict-promoting policies remains very limited, in particular concerning the ways in which this emotion can be used by political actors to foster support for hostile policies.

In order to analyse this topic more in detail, this paper focuses on two key interconnected questions using the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as case study:

- 1) Does hate influence support for policies more than other emotions?
- 2) Is hate mobilized by political actors?

For this we will combine strategies of both quantitative and qualitative analysis, in order to offer a clearer and broader picture of how hate can impact policy support and political behavior. The quantitative analysis provides measurable, generalizable results that show the broader patterns of how emotions, particularly hate, influence policy preferences. At the same time, the qualitative analysis offers rich insights into the mechanisms behind these patterns, helping to explain how political actors

deliberately evoke and use hate to influence their public into support certain actions. This mixed-methods approach is valuable because it allows us to not only see the "what" of the issue, which is determining whether hate can shape policy support, but also the "how" and "why" this is put into action by exploring the strategies and contexts that drive these outcomes. Together, these methods provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the main issue, making the findings more relevant for both scholars and policymakers.

2.1. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The first question is explored using quantitative methods to see how hate compares to emotions like anger, fear, or empathy in shaping public support for policies that aim to promote and maintain conflict. For this, we will use the data collected by Penic et al. (2024) in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to test empirically the supposed positive correlation between hate and support to conflict-promoting policies, as well as the negative correlation between hate and conflict-moderating policies. After describing the characteristics of our sample, we will elaborate a detailed analysis of two linear regression models used to test the statistical correlations between hate and policy support.

For the analysis of emotions, we will consider personally experienced group-based emotions, which are felt by individuals on behalf of their own in-group (Mackie, Smith & Ray, 2008; Niedenthal & Brauer, 2012). In fact, as mentioned in the previous chapter, according to Halperin (2015) group-based emotions playing a central role in determine policy support and behavioral outcomes, as people's feelings toward members of opposing groups significantly influence their support for conflict-related policies and behaviors, together with their perception of their own in-group and the general context of the conflict they are affected by.

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Based on the theoretical framework discussed above, we are testing our data with the following expectations: first, hate will not be the predominant emotion (H1); second, hate will predict support for conflict-promoting (“negative”) policies, showing a positive correlation with negative policies (H2); and third, hate will be associated with a lack of support for conflict-moderating (“constructive”) policies, showing a negative correlation between hate and positive policies (H3).

Considering H1, even if hate normally provides a huge contribution to the escalation and maintaining of long-term conflicts, we don’t necessarily expect it to be the prevalent emotion declared by the respondents in the survey for several reasons supported by past studies. In fact, Halperin (2008, Study 1) showed that people can find it difficult to admit directly that they feel hate towards another group, as hate can be considered a socially inappropriate emotion for its destructive nature and individuals may not want to acknowledge that they feel such an emotion. For example, in the cited study Halperin asked 40 Israelis if they ever experienced an event that made them feel hatred, and all respondents immediately answered that they had never felt such emotion, while admitting having felt extreme anger at times, to know other people that had felt hatred, and to be aware that hate was the prevalent emotion in conflict zones. In particular, despite stating that they never felt hate towards other people, some of the respondents still described situations in which they would have wanted to throw bombs on Palestinians cities to do everything possible to annihilate Palestinians, which are precisely the kind of attitudes that are normally associated to hate.

Moreover, as suggested by scholars (see Halperin, 2015; Fischer et al. 2018) hate is more likely to be present or more intense in response to significant events, such as incidents or attacks. The survey data that we will present and analyse in this paper were collected just before the political elections of November 2022, in a moment when the main focus of Israeli concerns was not the Palestinian situation, but rather other internal political issues. Even if election campaigns are usually periods of time when politicians try to activate sentiments of national belonging and foster intense emotional

reactions to attract voters to support their own party or vote against the rivals, in this case the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was probably not central enough to have a significant impact on the emotions felt by the Israeli respondents towards the outgroup (the Palestinians) in that particular moment. However, we expect hate to be much more present in the general population and in public discourse after major negative events such like the attack of Hamas on October 2023, as we will study in the following chapter.

As for the regression models, several scholars including Halperin (2015) argued that hate is not only associated to support of violent action and policies that foster conflict (H2) but it also discourages compromise actions and support of conflict-moderating policies (H3). Moreover, we think it is important to test both cases because the fact of influencing the support to one type of policy doesn't automatically exclude the possibility to support opposite action as well. In fact, as argued previously, some emotion can be ambivalent and result in very different action tendencies depending on the different appraisal process of each individual. For example, some studies have shown that anger can be associated not only with increased support for aggressive behaviours, but also with some type of conflict-moderating actions (Halperin, 2015). Testing both hypotheses will allow us to understand if hate has a similar impact or not.

2.2. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The second question looks at whether and how political actors use hate to influence people's behavior, which will be explored using qualitative analysis of the public speeches held by the Israeli authorities in front of the United Nations in English.

Specifically, we argue that Israeli authorities, in particular those ideologically related to the current government led by Netanyahu, are likely to use hate speech to spread hate against the

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Palestinians in the attempt to foster support for the aggressive policies they are currently implementing in the context of the Gaza war (H4).

Moreover, we also argue that this attitude is not just related to the specific events of October 7th, but it is instead a systematic attitude that has been repeated over the years, in particular during periods of higher tensions (H5).

In order to examine these two supplementary hypotheses, we'll focus on distinct sets of speeches given by Israeli government representatives on conflicts involving Gaza, in particular when addressing to the members of the United Nations General Assembly or of the United Nations Security Council. In fact, in the context of the Gaza conflicts, The Human Rights Council found evidence of war crimes in the actions of both Israel and Hamas in different occasions, in particular for the Gaza wars in 2014¹ and in 2023/2024², which led the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to hold multiple speeches regarding the Gaza conflict in front of the United Nations assemblies, allowing us to have a large number of texts available for this analysis.

Specifically, for H4 we'll analyse the speeches given by former Ambassador Gilad Erdan, an Israeli politician and diplomat from the Likud party who served as Israel's Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 2020 to August 2024 (19 speeches). These speeches, delivered at the UN Security Council following the start of the most recent Gaza war (October 7, 2023), will provide insight into his approach to addressing the international community on this issue.

As for H5, we'll add three speeches delivered by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the United Nations General Assembly during or shortly after major conflicts with Hamas in Gaza, specifically in 2009 (24th September 2009), 2014 (29th September 2014), and 2024 (27th September

¹ [Is Israeli bombing of Gaza a violation of international laws? | Gaza News | Al Jazeera](#)

² [Gaza conflict 2014: 'War crimes by both sides' - UN - BBC News](#)

2024). By comparing these speeches, we should be able to assess whether Netanyahu's rhetoric towards Palestinians during more intense periods of conflict has evolved or remained consistent over time, as other key factors, such as his role as Prime Minister, the specific conflict zone, and Hamas as the opposing force, are staying constant in this setting.

We chose to consider the speeches of some of the most prominent figures of the Israeli ruling government because in representative democracies, of which Israel is an example, there is an important link between public policy and public opinion (Wlezien & Soroka, 2021). Therefore, we expect those who have the capacity to influence public sentiment, such as public figures, and authorities, to take advantage of such a strong emotion to promote their own agendas when relevant. Politicians are sometimes influenced by the needs of their electorate in order to gain and maintain support (Gabel & Scheve, 2007), but they also hold significant power in shaping public opinion (De Vries & Edwards, 2009) and they have a fundamental role in the process of policymaking, especially when they are part of the ruling government. Thus, we expect representatives of elected governments aiming to create or sustain conflicts to use hate as a tool to shape public opinion in favour of their aggressive policies, primarily spreading it through their most direct form of communication, which is public speeches. In other words, we expect government representatives to use forms of hate speech to gain and maintain public support for conflict-promoting policies against their perceived enemies.

In the context of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Israeli government has systematically implemented some types of "negative" policies as defined in the previous chapter, resulting for example in the territorial dispossession and expulsion of Palestinians (B'tselem, 2017a), militarized aggression (B'tselem, 2017b), and security measures that aimed at suppressing Palestinian violence and dissent (B'tselem, 2017c). While some Israelis oppose these policies and advocate for more constructive solutions, such as reparation (Halperin, Cohen-Chen & Goldenberg, 2014) and equality-promoting policies (Shuman et al., 2022), the current government is keeping a different approach.

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In particular, the current Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, is known for his strong stance on the Palestine issue, with little effort towards conflict resolution with the Palestinian authorities. Although he has at times expressed support for a two-state solution, in practice he has not made significant moves toward establishing an independent Palestinian state. On the contrary, during his long career as Israeli Prime Minister he has progressively pushed the government towards more extreme far-right positions, intensifying the settlements and increasing restrictions. This tendency for conflict-promoting policies and actions was further amplified after the dramatic attack of Hamas on October 7th, 2023, which resulted in a highly violent response from the Israeli military forces. For example, in 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has started investigations against Netanyahu and the Israeli Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity related to military operations in Gaza³, while the UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, stated that "there are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating the commission of the crime of genocide against Palestinians as a group in Gaza has been met". The ICC formally issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Gallant, and one of the Hamas commander Ibrahim Al-Masri in November 2024⁴.

Moreover, in a recent interview given to "Democracy Now!" in October 2024⁵, Albanese further highlights the role of hate in explaining the nature of the actions that are being carried out by the Israeli forces in Gaza, highlighting that it is not something new in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

³ [ICC seeking arrest warrants for Hamas leaders and Israel's Netanyahu | UN News](#)

⁴ [Statement of ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC on the issuance of arrest warrants in the Situation in the State of Palestine | International Criminal Court](#)

⁵ ["Genocide as Colonial Erasure": U.N. Expert Francesca Albanese on Israel's "Intent to Destroy" Gaza | Democracy Now!](#)

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*“What has happened as of October 7, which has provided the opportunity to escalate violence, to build on the rage and on the fury of many Israelis, turning the soldiers into willful executioners, is that there was already a plan, **hatred**. [...]The Palestinians, like Ilan Pappé says, are victims not of war, but of a political ideology that has been unleashed. Palestinians have always been an unwanted encumbrance in the Israeli mindset, because they are an obstacle both as an identity and as legal status to the realization of Greater Israel as a state for Jewish Israelis only. [...] **Hatred against the Palestinians and hate speech, it’s not something that started on October 7.**” (F. Albanese, *Democracy Now!*, October 2024)*

Despite the ongoing tensions that have characterised the recent relationship between Israel and the UN⁶, we chose to consider only speeches delivered to the UN international community in English in order to minimize the possibility of misinterpretation due to eventual translation issues from Hebrew, the only official language of Israel⁷. Even if Hebrew is the official language of Israeli authorities, we exclude that the use of English as main language may cause any issue for the speakers, as both Netanyahu and Erdan have a high level of proficiency and are aware of the nuances of their word choices. In fact, Netanyahu spent a significant part of his youth in the United States and is perfectly bilingual, while Erdan served as Israeli Ambassador to the United States in 2021. Moreover, for UN speeches we have a direct access to reliable transcripts available online through the United Nations Digital Library System⁸, which ensures more accuracy in the collection of data.

However, in this context (a formal UN setting addressing to an international audience in English), we expect expressions of hate to be toned down in comparison with other public speeches made by the same representatives in Hebrew and in a national setting. This difference is mostly due to the audience to which these speeches are addressed and the different set of expectations and socially accepted behaviours that characterise each target group. In this particular case, the speeches are taking place at the UN, a diplomatic environment characterised by inclusive values and a strong opposition

⁶ [Hostility at the UN will not trouble Netanyahu, but now he’s angered the US | Israel | The Guardian](#)

⁷ [‘One more racist law’: reactions as Israel axes Arabic as official language | Israel | The Guardian](#)

⁸ [United Nations Digital Library System](#)

to any form of hate speech⁹. Moreover, the choice to use English over Hebrew clearly shows that the target audience is not the Israeli nationals, who are likely to be more receptive to communications in their own language, but rather the international community, that is instead more likely to adhere to the core values of peace and cooperation promoted by the UN and less emotionally involved with the core issue. Hence, we can assume that finding evidence of mobilisation of hate in speeches addressed to this kind of international audience would be more difficult, or at least less explicit, than in texts meant for a domestic Israeli public.

. In order to maximise the possibility to find traces of hate speech in these texts, where these expressions will be more nuanced than in national arenas, we will consider only speeches that were delivered during one of the three major Gaza wars (2008-2009, 2014 and 2023-ongoing) or shortly after, within one year of each conflict's end. The timing of the speeches should allow us to capture moments when emotions are more intense and "immediate hate" is most likely to be evident in the rhetoric, reflecting the intensity of the hostilities that were ongoing or just ended at the time on which the speeches were delivered. Moreover, despite the overt criticism of the Israeli authorities against the UN bodies, which is typical of populist parties like Likud¹⁰, in this context a direct expression of hatred and aggressive behaviour might not be favourable for Netanyahu if it's not perceived as justified by the audience. Therefore, we expect elements of hate, if present, to emerge mainly in periods of intense tension, keeping in mind that their communication is likely to be more direct and aggressive in national arenas than in diplomatic international contexts.

To analyse the speeches in greater detail, we will use a combination of elements from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as theorized by van Dijk (1991; 1998; 2006) along with the five-step

⁹ [United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#)

¹⁰ [Populism and public attitudes toward international organizations: Voting, communication, and education | The Review of International Organizations](#)

social identity model developed by Reicher et al. (2008) to recognise the stages of development of collective hate. We will apply model of Reicher et al. (2008) described in the previous chapter to assess whether it is possible to identify any elements that characterise the five stages of constructing social identities that can lead to extreme actions, as defined in the first chapter. If this framework is applicable to the speeches taken into consideration for this study, we argue that this would be an indicator that the Israeli authorities are using their official communications to spread hate towards their Palestinian enemies in international settings to promote support for their aggressive policies.

As for CDA, which has long studied how language shapes socio-political cognition while reflecting, changing, and reinforcing ideologies, it will provide a framework for understanding how social dynamics are enabled and reproduced through text and speech (van Dijk, 1998). Van Dijk's approach suggests that ideological discourse often follows an "Ideological Square" (van Dijk, 2006) characterized by positive self-presentation of the ingroup ("us") and negative derogating presentation of the outgroup ("them"), which is commonly seen in political speeches. As these speeches are delivered by Israeli authorities, the ingroup ("us") will be represented by Israel, while the opposing outgroup ("them") will be represented by Hamas and Palestinian authorities.

2.2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

When analysing speeches, it is not only crucial to have a deep understanding of the general context and the specific content of the texts concerned, but it is also important to consider the linguistic choices that are made to express a particular concept or idea. Language plays a crucial role in shaping how people construct socio-political cognition, and it serves as an important tool not only for expressing ideologies, but also to change and reproduce them. This idea has been central to the studies on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a field that has long studied the connections between language,

power, society, ideology, and politics. In CDA, language is not just a neutral means of communication, but it is seen instead as a powerful tool through which dominant groups impose their ideologies and cultural norms on society. In this context, lexical choices are seen as a way to reveal and emphasize the intentions and beliefs of their users (Fairclough, 1995), providing an insight into how social power abuse and dominance can be put into action and reproduced using written and oral texts to maintain social inequalities (van Dijk, 1998).

By analysing these mechanisms, CDA aims to uncover the hidden ideologies embedded in discourse, including the identification of the strategies that make certain beliefs or values seem natural or unquestionable, while marginalizing others. In particular, van Dijk (1998) has developed a comprehensive framework for understanding the relations between ideology, politics, cognition, and discourse. According to the professor, people's ideological values and attitudes are shaped by internal mental models that influence how individuals interpret the world and interact with others. Elaborating on this assumption, his work highlights the cognitive aspect of language use, suggesting that cognition acts as a bridge between social practices and discourse.

Van Dijk (2006) also introduces the concept of the "Ideological Square" to analyse how ideologies are communicated in texts and speeches, particularly in political contexts. This framework identifies four key strategies that speakers use to promote the group they belong to (in-group favouritism) while marginalising and discriminating those that are not part of it (out-group derogation). Notably, this is done by emphasizing positive aspects of the in-group, emphasizing negative aspects of the out-group, de-emphasizing negative aspects of the in-group, and de-emphasizing positive aspects of the out-group.

In short, speakers have the tendency to highlight the virtues, strengths, or achievements of their own group to create a favourable image of the in-group and foster a sense of moral superiority and trustworthiness. At the same time, the negative traits or actions of the opposing group are highlighted

to portray them as a threat or morally inferior. When negative behaviours or flaws exist within the in-group, they are downplayed or rationalized in order to maintain the group's positive image and reduce internal or external criticism. On the other hand, any positive traits or achievements of the out-group are minimized or ignored to reinforce a biased, negative view of them.

According to van Dijk, signs of these tactics can be found in a large variety of texts, including political speeches. In particular, politicians tend not only to emphasize all positive aspects of themselves and their own in-group, for example their party, their ideology or their nation, but mostly importantly to highlight and point out all negative aspects of their opposants, while hiding or mitigating any information that may give a bad impression of the in-group. In fact, by applying these strategies, sometimes expressed in a subtle way, speakers can create a sharp contrast between the in-group and the out-group, reinforcing group identity and justifying actions that serve the interests of their own in-group, such as the exclusion or hostility towards the out-group(s).

In this study, the goal of discourse analysis is to examine how Netanyahu and Erdan use language to influence power dynamics, shape ideologies and assert specific identities, in particular through the use of expressions that might foster hate towards Hamas. As reported by Khaled (2020) CDA is considered the most suitable method for this purpose, as it provides a deep understanding of how hegemonic authorities might filter (or even distort) information in order to justify and legitimize hostile actions or war against another nation (Bazzi, 2009). We will the implementation of these strategies in the following sections.

3. CASE STUDY: THE ISREALI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

3.1. OVERVIEW OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

In this chapter we will start introducing the general context of Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a particular focus on the situation during most recent years, as a deep understanding of the overall context in which emotions are experienced is fundamental to predict the outcome of that hate.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a long-standing and deeply rooted ongoing dispute between Israelis and Palestinians over land, national identity, and political sovereignty in the region historically known as Palestine¹¹. The ongoing military and political conflict, which began in 1948 with the creation of Israel, has significant historical, religious, and political dimensions, and encompasses key issues such as and the unlawful military occupation of Palestinian territories¹² (including the West Bank and Gaza Strip) since 1967, the illegal Israeli settlements, the definition of the borders between the two states (including the status of Jerusalem), security issues, and violation of Palestinian human rights such as “demolition of homes and destruction of property, the excessive use of force by security forces, mass incarceration, settler violence, restrictions of movement, and limitations on access to livelihoods, basic necessities, services and humanitarian assistance” as reported by the UN Human Rights Office¹³. The long endurance of this situation and its significant political and humanitarian implications make the Israeli-Palestinian conflict it one of the most intractable and contentious in modern history, even if the power imbalance between Isreal and

¹¹ [Israel's borders explained in maps \(bbc.com\)](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-56181111)

¹² [Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, tantamount to 'settler-colonialism': UN expert | UN News](https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/170811.doc.htm)

¹³ [Commission of Inquiry finds that the Israeli occupation is unlawful under international law | OHCHR](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=18618&Lang=en)

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Palestina recently raised criticism in framing it as a 2-sided intractable conflict rather than an occupation (Hakim et al., 2022).

As confirmed by the data on casualties in the occupied Palestinian territory reported by OCHA¹⁴, the consequences of this prolonged conflict have systematically been much more devastating on Palestinian civilians than among the Israeli population, as Israel is a richer country that can benefit from the contribution of powerful western allies as the United States and has access to the most modern and innovative war technologies to prevent and block foreign attacks, such as Iron Dome air defence system. However, this important disadvantage in terms of resources has never discouraged the Palestinian militants to continue pursuing the conflict, recurring at other types of violent action against the Israeli population, such as terrorist attacks.

There have been numerous attempts at peace aiming to define a two-state solution, such as the Camp David Accords in 1978, the Oslo Accords from 1993 to 1995 which created the officially recognized Palestinian Authority, the Camp David Summit in 2000, and the Road Map for Peace in 2003, but none of these efforts resulted in a stable solution. The conflict now remains unresolved, and the situation is highly volatile, with periodic escalations of violence and indiscriminate attacks in the most critical regions such as the West Bank (with the continuous tensions at the checkpoints put up to restrict and control Palestinians' movements) or in the Gaza Strip, whose population has suffered from different wars in the past few years.

¹⁴ [Data on casualties | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory \(ochaopt.org\)](https://ochaopt.org)

3.2. CONFLICT ISRAEL DOMESTIC POLITICS – NETANYAHU & LIKUD

In the context of this long-term conflict, it is interesting to notice that the Israeli public opinion does not have a homogenous view on the approach that their government should adopt in regards with the Palestine issue. On the contrary, the Israeli society is deeply polarized in what concerns foreign policy and national security, presenting a sharp opposition between the right-wing “hawks” that support more aggressive policies and left-wing ‘doves’ that normally support more reconciliating positions (Kesgin, 2020; Harel, Maoz & Halperin, 2019).

Moreover, in the past few years Israel has gone through an important political crisis characterised by a heavy political instability that led to 5 elections to vote for the composition of the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, in less than 4 years (Cohen, 2023). The most recent elections held on November 2022 were won by the veteran Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanks to the support of a coalition of ultra-Orthodox and religious Zionist parties, positioning the current government at the most extreme right end of the political spectrum in the history of Israel.¹⁵

Benjamin Netanyahu is Israel’s longest-serving Prime Minister, holding multiple terms in office. Born in Tel Aviv in 1949 to a politically active family, Netanyahu was influenced by his father, Benzion Netanyahu, a prominent historian with strong nationalist views. He spent part of his youth in the United States, studying at MIT, and served in Israel’s elite military commando unit, experiences that shaped his perspectives on security and diplomacy. Netanyahu began his political career in the 1980s, serving as Israel’s Deputy Chief of Mission in Washington D.C., and later as Ambassador to the United Nations from 1984 to 1988. In 1988, he returned to Israel, entered the Knesset as a member of the conservative party “Likud”, and quickly rose to lead the party. His firm views on security,

¹⁵ [Netanyahu’s right-wing Israeli government is beyond extreme | Vox](#)

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particularly after the 1991 Gulf War and the 1993 Oslo Accords, resonated with Israelis skeptical of peace negotiations. He first served as Prime Minister from 1996 to 1999, returning to power from 2009 to 2021, and again in 2022. During his mandate, Netanyahu focused on strengthening Israel's economy, opposing Iran's nuclear ambitions, and fostering diplomatic ties, particularly with the United States. His close relationship with the US President Donald Trump was notable, and he played a key role in the 2020 Abraham Accords, which normalized relations between Israel and United Arab Emirates.

Despite this attempt of getting closer to some Arabic states, Netanyahu has rarely expressed support for a two-state solution and made limited progress toward establishing a Palestinian state and collaborating with the Palestinian Authority (PA). The PA, established in 1994 following the Oslo Accords, represents Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza in coordination with Israel, even if Israel does not officially recognize it as the government of a sovereign state. Netanyahu has historically opposed elements of the Oslo Accords and has been cautious in advancing the peace process with the PA, focusing instead on settlements and security measures. His right-wing and hawkish views on security has often leaned toward maintaining the conflict rather than pursuing compromise, which has intensified the divide and furthered restrictions on Palestinians, steering his government toward increasingly conservative policies that has been divisive both domestically and internationally.

His attitude towards the Palestinian issue is also reflected in the policies supported by his party, Likud, that Netanyahu has been leading for nearly two decades. Despite its liberal roots, under Netanyahu's leadership Likud has gradually transformed into the current exclusionary populist right-wing party that is now dominant in Israel, characterised by a strong focus on nationalism, conservative values, and a hawkish stance on security issues that includes favouring strong military responses to threats and generally opposing major territorial concessions to the Palestinians. Likud is rooted in Revisionist Zionism, a nationalist ideology that advocates for the right of the Jewish people to settle

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anywhere in the historical land of Israel, which includes both the modern state of Israel and the Palestinian territories.

This hard stance on the Palestinian issue has sometimes strained relationships with entities advocating for a two-state solution and human rights organizations such as the UN, which is strongly criticised by the current Israeli government, but in general it has not much compromised the party's ties with his Western allies, first and foremost the US government. This is also visible in the international reactions that followed the ICC arrests warrants for Netanyahu for crimes against humanities committed towards the Palestinians during the current Gaza war, with US President Joe Biden considering the ICC allegations "outrageous"¹⁶.

However, during his latest term as Prima Minister, the popularity of Netanyahu has been considerably decreasing among Israelis because of a combination of security, political, and economic challenges, especially after the events of October 7th. In fact, domestically the Hamas attack has been seen as a significant security failure of the Israeli government and military forces, undermining public trust in Netanyahu's leadership. Additionally, his judicial reform efforts, aimed at reducing the judiciary's power, caused large protests in the country¹⁷ as many citizens see them as a threat to Israel's democracy. Corruption charges, including allegations of fraud and bribery, have further damaged his public image, contributing to erode significantly the Netanyahu's public support on the national level.

These issues, together with general economic concerns and crime issues in some Arab communities within Israel, often took precedence over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in terms of public concern, causing it to be somewhat deprioritized in the political discourse compared other issues that were perceived as more immediate and pressing. However, the situation quickly changed

¹⁶ [World reacts to ICC arrest warrants for Israel's Netanyahu, Gallant | Israel-Palestine conflict News | Al Jazeera](#)

¹⁷ [What to know about the Israeli protests over Netanyahu's judicial reforms \(nbcnews.com\)](#)

after the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th, 2023, bringing the conflict back to the forefront of national and international attention.

3.3. HAMAS AND THE GAZA CONFLICT AFTER OCTOBER 7TH, 2023

The dramatic Hamas-led terrorist attack of October 7th, 2023 initiated one of the most devastating chapters of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During a speech at the US congress in July 2024, the Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu even compared the attack of October 7th to "20 9/11s in one day". This statement can be considered an exaggeration from the point of view of Israel, as for example the casualties of 9/11 in the US were more than double the number of Israeli victims reported killed during the attacks of October 7th - nearly 3000 people¹⁸ for 9/11 against nearly 1300 people¹⁹ for 10/7 – but it can give an idea of the importance of this event in the broader context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Within of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Gaza conflict is considered one of the most intractable. Its roots go back to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which led to Israeli control over the land and the forced displacement of thousands of Palestinians from their homes. Many of these displaced Palestinians ended up in Gaza, a small strip of land along the Mediterranean. Initially controlled by Egypt, Gaza was occupied by Israel after the 1967 war. Israel kept full control over Gaza until 1994, when it withdrew following the peace agreements between Israelis and Palestinians. However, even after the withdrawal, the newly created Palestinian Authority was given only limited control over Gaza. Many Palestinians felt that the peace process failed to deliver true independence or improve their living

¹⁸ [Key figures on the September 11 attacks, 2001 in New York | Statista](#)

¹⁹ [An analysis of the 7th of October 2023 casualties in Israel - AOAV](#)

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conditions, and the dissatisfaction with the Palestinian Authority's governance, combined with ongoing Israeli control over borders, airspace, and resources, fuelled support for alternative groups advocating armed resistance such as Hamas.

Hamas, which is an acronym for "Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya" (Islamic Resistance Movement), is an Islamist militant organization and political group that operates primarily in the Palestinian territories, particularly the Gaza Strip. Founded in 1987 during the First Intifada, a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation, it emerged as a reaction to the failures of the main nationalist Palestinian movements, such as Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to achieve Palestinian independence.

Hamas's ideology combines Palestinian nationalism with Islamic fundamentalism, and it aims to establish an Islamic state in historic Palestine, which includes the current territory of Israel, and it rejects the existence of the state of Israel. It seeks to liberate Palestine, considering the territory stretching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea²⁰, and to establish an Islamic state in this area. This goal includes the elimination of the state of Israel, which Hamas does not officially recognize.

The military wing of Hamas, known as the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, is responsible for carrying out attacks against Israel, including rocket fire, suicide bombings, and other forms of armed resistance. Hamas's military operations have led to several major conflicts with Israel prior to October 7th, including the wars in Gaza in 2008-2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021, each resulting in significant casualties and destruction.

For this reason, Hamas is considered as a terrorist organization by many countries such as the United States, the European Union and Israel, in particular for the use of violence against civilians,

²⁰ "From the river to the sea" is one of the most famous Palestinian political slogans against the Israeli occupation

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its refusal to recognize Israel, and its involvement in acts considered as terrorism. However, some countries and groups, particularly in the Arab and Muslim world, view Hamas as a legitimate resistance movement against Israeli occupation.

In general, Hamas activities has been marked by a combination of social services and strict enforcement of Islamic law, as well as ongoing conflict with Israel, making the organisation appear as very controversial. In fact, despite performing violent military actions, its political wing political engages in social welfare activities, such as running schools, hospitals, and charitable organizations, which has helped the group gain significant public support in the Palestinian territories.

Hamas also participated to the regular Palestinian legislative elections, which they won in 2006. This victory led to a violent conflict with Fatah, the dominant party in the Palestinian Authority at the time, resulting in Hamas' takeover of Gaza in 2007. Since then, Hamas has ruled the Gaza Strip independently, while the Palestinian Authority, dominated by Fatah, controls parts of the West Bank. In Gaza, Hamas' government has been marked by a combination of social services and strict enforcement of Islamic law. The group's governance has faced criticism for authoritarian practices, including crackdowns on political dissent and restrictions on civil liberties. The economic situation in Gaza has also deteriorated under Hamas' rule, exacerbated by Israeli and Egyptian blockades, internal mismanagement, and the effects of repeated conflicts.

In fact, the Gaza wars has been multiple during the last few decades. These include the 2008-2009 conflict ("Operation Cast Lead"), sparked by ongoing rocket fire into Israel; the 2012 conflict ("Operation Pillar of Defense"), initiated after an Israeli airstrike killed a Hamas military leader; and the 2014 war ("Operation Protective Edge"), the deadliest conflict, which lasted 50 days and caused extensive casualties and destruction. The 2018-2019 Great March of Return protests saw mass demonstrations at the Gaza-Israel border, leading to clashes. In 2021, heightened tensions in Jerusalem escalated into an 11-day war ("Operation Guardian of the Walls").

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Each conflict has left Gaza with severe humanitarian and infrastructural damage, exacerbating an already dramatic situation caused by prolonged Israeli and Egyptian blockade, which led progressively to the events of October 7th, 2023.

On Saturday October 7th, 2023, during the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, Hamas-led Palestinian militants breached Gaza's security barriers launching a surprise attack on Israel²¹. This initial assault involved both a barrage of rockets and the infiltration of thousands of militants targeting both Israeli civilians and military installations, which resulted in the deaths of 1,139 people²², including 695 Israeli civilians, 373 security forces and 71 foreigners, while more than 200 Israelis were made hostage²³ to pressure the Israeli authorities to release Palestinian prisoners. This fuelled an intense armed conflict that has been since ongoing between Israel and Hamas with devastating implications for the millions of Palestinian civilians that live in the Gaza Strip, which is also one of the most densely populated regions of the world. This marks the fifth war in the Gaza-Israel conflict since 2008 and has become the deadliest episode for Palestinians in the entire history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict so far.

Following the attack, Israel responded with a highly destructive bombing campaign and began a ground invasion of Gaza with the stated goals of annihilate Hamas and freeing the hostages. According to data shared by the United Nations²⁴, since the start of this operation, over 40,000 Palestinians in Gaza have lost their lives, including mostly women and children, despite Israel's declared intention to not purposely target civilians. During the past few months Israel has increasingly intensified blockades in Gaza cutting off essential supplies and humanitarian aids while

²¹ [What happened in Israel? A breakdown of how Hamas attack unfolded | Israel-Palestine conflict News | Al Jazeera](#)

²² [Israel social security data reveals true picture of Oct 7 deaths \(france24.com\)](#)

²³ <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-769274>

²⁴ [Most of Gaza's 40,000 dead are women and children, says UN rights chief | UN News](#)

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simultaneously attacking Palestinian civil infrastructures like schools and hospitals, which led to the collapse of healthcare services and a serious famine in the whole Strip area. According to OCHA²⁵, at the end of March 2023 already about 1.7 million people in Gaza (roughly 75% of the population) had been internally displaced, about 72% of the buildings in Gaza have been destroyed, and the lack of access to basic items such as food, clean water and medicines is causing the rates of malnutrition to be the highest ever seen in the region. The United Nations also recently condemned²⁶ the continued loss of life in Gaza caused by “recurring failures by the Israeli Defence Forces to comply with the rules of war”²⁷ as the Israeli military keep launching attacks against civilian infrastructures used as shelter for displaced Palestinians families. In June 2024, the UN Security Council urged Israel and Hamas to implement a proposed resolution²⁸ that includes a three-phase ceasefire deal to end the war in Gaza without delay and condition, but to this day the resolution remains unimplemented. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has even started investigations and issued arrest warrants for both Israeli authorities and Hamas representatives in November 2024²⁹, but the way to a definite ceasefire still appears long and difficult.

²⁵ [Flash Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2024 | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory \(ochaopt.org\)](https://www.ochaopt.org/)

²⁶ [UN chief condemns ‘devastating strike’ on Gaza school | UN News](#)

²⁷ [Most of Gaza's 40,000 dead are women and children, says UN rights chief | UN News](#)

²⁸ [n2416511.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

²⁹ [Statement of ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC on the issuance of arrest warrants in the Situation in the State of Palestine | International Criminal Court](#)

4. HATE AS PREDICTOR OF CONFLICT POLICIES IN ISRAEL

4.1. DATASET CHARACTERISTICS

As previously mentioned, for our analysis we will use the data collected by Penic et al. (2024) through an online survey conducted the Qualtrics platform from October 17th to 25th 2022, just before the latest Israeli election of November 2022 that saw the conservative leader Benjamin Netanyahu come back as Prime Minister for his sixth term. The sample was composed by 620 Israeli Jews of diverse age (18 to 70 years old), educational level and political orientation (right: N=284, center: N=141, left: N=196) that were recruited by the Israeli survey company iPanel under financial remuneration. The respondents were mostly women (97 men and 509 women), but the robustness checks performed by the researchers confirm that the gender imbalance was not majorly affecting their findings (Penic et al, 2024?) and the regression models in this study are controlled for gender to further verify whether this parameter is statistically significant in the analysis performed. For the sake of clarity, we will use the general term “Israeli Jews” or “Israelis” to refer to the respondents of the survey, even if we are aware of the fact that the sample is large, but not enough diverse in terms of gender, age and education to be considered representative of the whole population of Israeli Jews. However, considering the difficulties to reach potential respondents in this particular context, we are confident that the sample is wide enough to allow us to get useful insights on the role of emotions on public policy support in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that might be worth to be studied further with more extensive investigations.

For the analysis we took in consideration the measures for all 6 personal group-based emotions towards the outgroup (Palestinians) included in the survey, in particular hate (“I hate Palestinians for what they have done to Jewish Israelis in the conflict.”), anger (“I feel anger about the actions of Palestinians in the context of the conflict.”), fear (“I feel fear of the Palestinians’ actions.”), empathy

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“I feel empathy for the suffering of Palestinians in the context of the conflict.”), guilt (“I feel guilty for the actions of some Jewish Israelis against Palestinians in the conflict.”) and hope (“I am hopeful that relations between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians will improve.”). In this case anger, fear, empathy, guilt and hope are mostly taken into account in the model to control the impact of hate compared to other emotions, even if it is important to make the distinction between the group of “negative” emotions (hate, anger, fear) that are normally associated to outcomes that sustain and reinforce the conflicts, and the group of “constructive” emotions (guilt, empathy, and hope) that are theoretically related to behaviours that foster peace even if they don’t necessarily make the person feel good (Cohen-Chen et al., 2020). The intensity of each emotion item was rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)³⁰. As for policy support, we considered the policies that were matching the emotions of our model on a theoretical base and made the distinction between “negative” conflict-promoting policies and “positive” conflict-moderating policies towards the outgroup. The support for the policy items were rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) and the score of “negative policies” was computed as the mean of 5 policy items, in particular:

- 2 separation/expulsion policies (“I would support policies that aim to separate Israeli Jews from Palestinians, politically and socially” and “I would support policies that aim to expel Palestinians from our territory.”) which are normally related to hate (Fischer et al, 2018)
- 1 aggression policy (“I would support physical and violent actions against the Palestinians to promote our goals in the conflict, even if it meant harming their civilians”), which is theoretically related to anger (Halperin, 2011c).

³⁰ The intensity of each emotion was measured using the following response categories means: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (somewhat disagree), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree). The survey originally included an additional response category (somewhat agree) was excluded due to a coding error. The scale is, therefore, less sensitive for the agreement with the items. However, this error has been consistent in the measure of all emotions, will not affect the analysis of the differences among the scores calculated for each emotion.

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- 2 security policies (“I would support security policies, such as the stronger military armament of Jews in Israel, to protect us against our enemies.” and “I would support security policies such as building of more checkpoints and installing surveillance cameras in the West Bank, in order to limit and track the movement of Palestinians.”) that are generally associated with fear (Haner et al., 2019).

The score of positive policies was also measured as the mean of different conflict-moderating policies, which in this case include 7 items:

- 2 polities supporting humanitarian action (I would support humanitarian policies, such as the provision of humanitarian aid (e.g., transfer of food and medicine, medical care) to Palestinians” and “I would support policy of providing medical care to injured Palestinian women and children in Israeli hospitals”) which is normally related to empathy (Halperin & Gross, 2011).
- 2 reparatory policies (“I would support reparation policies that compensate Palestinians for what they were hurt by Israel during the conflict” and “In order to achieve stable peace, I would support policies that include giving some Palestinian refugees the rights to return to Israel”) theoretically associated with guilt (see Brown et al., 2008)
- 1 political compromise policy (“I would support political compromise with Palestinians in order to achieve lasting peace”) generally associated with hope (Cohen-Chen et al., 2014a).
- 2 policies seeking equality between the ingroup and the outgroup (“I would like to live in peace and equality with Palestinians, as neighbours and friends.” And “I would support policies that promote equality in Israel between Jews and Palestinians in housing, education and jobs.”), that are theoretically opposite to the action tendencies of hate, as normally the object of hate is perceived as inferior thus not to be considered equal to the ingroup (Fischer et al., 2018)

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Testing the internal reliability, we can see that for both variables Cronbach's alpha is > 0.7 , specifically 0.781 for negative policies and 0.884 for positive policies (Tab.A), which means that the internal reliability is acceptable.

	Reliability Statistics	
Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Negative policies	.781	5
Positive policies	.884	7

Tab. A -Reliability statistics for Negative policies and Positive policies.

In the analysis of the role of hate in policy support, both our regression models consistently controlled for political belonging (right/centre/left)³¹, level of identification with the ingroup of Israeli Jews ("Israeli Jews identity"), and level of religiosity ("Religiosity"), as these factors can significantly influence support for certain policies. In fact, behavioural and policy support tendencies are also influenced by the personal set of value of an individual (Halperin, 2015) and these items are associated with specific values that can easily affect policy support outcomes. For example, supporters of right-wing populist parties are generally characterized by more conservative views, such as a greater attachment to national identity matters and security policies that aim for the protection of the ingroup, as well as stronger support for military aggression (Joo et al., 2024). Similarly, higher levels of religiosity are also often associated with conservative political opinions as well as a stronger sense of identity, which is particularly relevant in the context of the Israeli society, as the belonging to the Jewish religion is one of the most fundamental identity traits of Israeli Jews. The country of Israel itself is defined as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, as specified by a basic

³¹ The political belonging item was rated on a scale ranging from extreme right (1) to extreme left (8), specifically: Extreme right (1), Right (2), Moderate right (4), Centre (5), Moderate left (6), Left (7), Extreme left (8). The number 3 is not present in the scale due to a coding error, but as the scale remained ordered gradually increasing from the most extreme right to the most extreme left this will not have a major impact the analysis of the results.

law passed by the Israeli Parliament in 2018³². Thus, religiosity and identity are expected to show results that are inversely proportional to political belonging, as stronger feelings of identity and religiosity typically align with right-wing political views, which are represented at the lower end of the political belonging scale in our model. In our model, religiosity is measured with the item “What is your degree of religiosity?” on a scale from 1 (Atheist) to 5 (Orthodox/very religious), while identity is assessed as the mean score of three different items (“Being a Jewish Israeli is an important part of my identity”, “When I talk about Jewish Israelis, I usually say we rather than they”, “It is important to me that others see me as Jewish Israeli”) measured on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

The main goal of the analysis is to understand whether hate can predict support to negative conflict-promoting policies and non-support of positive conflict-moderating policies above and beyond other factors and emotions.

4.2. SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS

4.2.1. H1 – Predominant emotion

To determine the predominant emotion of the Israeli Jews towards the Palestinians, we calculated the mean score for each individual group-based emotion and compared the scores to see which one had the highest average rating. The emotion with the highest mean score is considered to be the predominant emotion.

³² [BasicLawNationState.pdf \(knesset.gov.il\)](#)

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Report						
	Hate	Anger	Fear	Guilt	Empathy	Hope
Mean	3.7064	4.2862	4.1068	2.8385	3.1840	3.3837
Std. Deviation	1.14128	.95299	.94839	1.41480	1.28627	1.23299

Tab. 2 – Mean scores of group-based emotions to test H1

Based on the data presented in Tab. 2, which includes the mean and standard deviation for each emotion, we can observe that, as predicted, hate doesn't seem to be the dominant emotion among the Israelis towards the Palestinians according to the answers in the survey, even if the mean of 3.706 indicates that most likely this emotion is present the majority of the respondents. In fact, the emotion with the highest mean score is anger (4,286), which indicates that on average, respondents feel anger more strongly than the other emotions measured. Anger is closely followed by fear (4.106), while hate can only be found in third place, with a mean score of 3.706, suggesting that hate is felt with less intensity and frequency than the other negative emotions.

However, the standard deviation of hate (1.141) indicates a moderate level of variability in how strongly Israeli Jews feel this emotion, suggesting that respondents were more likely to feel either a lot of hate or very low hate. However, when checking for the frequencies (Tab 2.1) we can actually see that only 13% of respondents declares a very low rate of hate (“strongly disagree, or disagree”), while the vast majority admit feeling some level of hate.

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		Hate			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	38	6.1	6.2	6.2
	Disagree	45	7.2	7.3	13.5
	Somewhat disagree	152	24.3	24.8	38.3
	Somewhat agree	202	32.3	33.0	71.3
	Strongly agree	176	28.2	28.7	100.0
	Total	613	98.1	100.0	
Missing	DK/R	12	1.9		
Total		625	100.0		

Tab. 2.1 – Frequencies of “Hate”

It is interesting to notice that each “negative” emotion (anger, fear and hate) remains the emotions that are felt with more intensity compared to the other “constructive” ones (guilt, empathy and hope), with guilt being the least felt emotion among the respondents (mean score of 2.838) and the one that shows of the most variability.

This in line with the theories and studies discussed in the previous chapter that see a high presence of these negative emotions in individuals that live or are highly exposed to contexts of intractable conflicts as the one between Israelis and Palestinians (Halperin, 2015). Thus, the survey data further confirms the significant presence of negative emotions towards the outgroup (Palestinians) among the Israeli Jews that participated in the study.

4.2.2. H2 – Hate as predictor of conflict-promoting policies

To test if hate can be considered a predictor of conflict-promoting policies, we built a linear regression model to investigate the correlation between the group-based personal feelings of hate towards the

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Palestinians (“Hate”) and our dependent variable, specifically the support for conflict-promoting policies that contributes to maintain and fuel conflict (Negative policies).

Other than hate, the model included as independent variables the remaining group-based personal emotions included in the study (Anger, Fear, Empathy, Guilt, Hope), values and identity items (Israeli Jewish identity, Religiosity, Political belonging) that can normally influence policy support, and other general socio-demographic items (Income, Education, Age, Gender)

The table presented below (Tab.3) presents the results of this regression analysis, followed by the ANOVA (Tab.3.1) and the Model Summary (Tab.3.2) that provide key metrics that help evaluate the overall fit and explanatory power of the regression model. We considered as statistically significant only the items with a p-value = $<.001$.

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Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.202	.329		9.742	<.001
	Hate	.334	.037	.344	9.082	<.001
	Anger	.023	.039	.020	.587	.557
	Fear	-.008	.038	-.007	-.220	.826
	Empathy	-.169	.032	-.201	-5.295	<.001
	Guilt	-.011	.029	-.015	-.395	.693
	Hope	-.079	.030	-.088	-2.658	.008
	Israeli Jewish identity	.160	.033	.162	4.910	<.001
	Religiosity	-.021	.021	-.033	-1.018	.309
	Political belonging right/centre/left	-.141	.022	-.233	-6.476	<.001
	Income	.001	.016	.001	.051	.960
	Education	-.022	.016	-.039	-1.339	.181
	Age	-.001	.002	-.017	-.578	.564
	Gender	.047	.086	.016	.553	.580

a. Dependent Variable: Negative policies

Tab. 3 – Results for regression analysis to test H2

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ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	384.247	13	29.557	55.510	<.001 ^b
	Residual	297.919	558	.532		
	Total	681.368	571			
a. Dependent Variable: Negative policies						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Hate, Anger, Fear, Hope, Empathy, Guilt, Israeli Jew identity, Religiosity, Income, Education, Age, Gender, Political belonging right/centre/left						

Tab. 3.1 – ANOVA of the regression model to test H2 (Negative policies)

Model Summary – Negative policies				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.751 ^a	.564	.554	.729
a. Predictors: (Constant), Hate, Anger, Fear, Hope, Empathy, Guilt, Israeli Jew identity, Religiosity, Income, Education, Age, Gender, Political belonging right/centre/left				

Tab. 3.2 – Model summary of the regression model to test H2 (Negative policies)

First, it's important to assess the overall significance of the model to see if it suitable to explain and predict the dependent variable (Negative policies). The ANOVA and Model Summary results (Tab 3.1 & 3.2) support the findings from the regression coefficients table, as the F-statistic value (55.510) further confirms that the overall model is a good fit and approximately 56% of the variance is explained by the predictors in the model. Moreover, the standard error of the estimate (.729) indicates

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a reasonable level of accuracy in predictions. This adds to the individual significance of specific predicting items, which were found to be significant in the regression analysis.

As shown in Tab. 3, hate is not only highly statistically significant ($p < .001$), but also the emotion with the strongest positive correlation with support to negative policies, with a standardized coefficient of .344. This indicates that as hate increases, the support to negative conflict-promoting policies also increases, which is in line with our expectations. However, concerning the other emotions theoretically associated to support to negative policies (anger and fear) they are not statistically significant in our model. This indicates that they don't not have a significant impact on predicting support to conflict-promoting policies in this context, despite being the predominant emotions felt by the respondents.

Data also show a significant negative correlation between empathy and support to negative policies, suggesting that as empathy increases, the support to conflict-promoting policies decreases. Hope also shows significance ($p = .008$), but its standardized coefficient (Beta= -.088) is less strong than the one of empathy (Beta= -.344). On the other hand, Guilt and all the standard demographic predictors used for control (Income, Education, Age, Gender) do not have a statistically significant impact on support to negative policies in our model.

Concerning the items associated to personal values, as expected the political belonging indicates a negative and significant relationship correlation with the dependent variable, suggesting that the more right-wing individuals are, the more likely they are to support conflict-promoting policies.

This is also in line with the results for the identity variable, that is also statistically significant in our model. In fact, identity shows a strong positive correlation with our dependent variable, suggesting that a stronger identity is associated with increased support to conflict-promoting policies. However, the level of religiosity, which was expected to have the same trend as political belonging and the identity variables, doesn't seem to be statistically relevant. This might suggest that the level

of religiosity is not associated with the degree of identification with the Israeli Jew community among our respondents, even if being part of the Jewish religion is an important feature of the Israeli Jew identity. Else, this discrepancy might be due to the fact that conservative religious people, including Orthodox Jews, are more prone to adhere strongly to the values preached by the Torah, that include pacifist beliefs and opposing violence. In fact, this is one of the reasons why many members of these communities, which are very influent in Israel, avoid engaging with violent action and serving the Israeli military in the context of the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict³³.

4.2.3. H3 – Hate as predictor of conflict-moderating policies

Our second regression model presents the same structure as the first one, but in this case the dependent variable is the support for conflict-moderating policies that foster reconciliation (Positive policies). As independent variables we included again all the personal group-based personal felt towards the Palestinians (Hate, Anger, Fear, Empathy, Guilt, Hope), predictors associated to personal values and identity (Israeli Jewish identity, Religiosity, Political belonging) and other general socio-demographic items (Income, Education, Age, Gender).

The results of the regression model can be found in Tab. 4, followed by the ANOVA (Tab. 4.1) and the Model Summary (Tab. 4.2). Once again, we considered as highly statistically significant only the items with a p-value = <.001.

³³ [Israel's ultra-Orthodox still won't fight, invoking scripture \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2023/07/12/israel-s-ultra-orthodox-still-won-t-fight-invoking-scripture)

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Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.919	.328		8.890	<.001
	Hate	-.225	.037	-.212	-6.116	<.001
	Anger	-.095	.039	-.074	-2.421	.016
	Fear	.022	.038	.018	.588	.556
	Hope	.139	.030	.143	4.678	<.001
	Empathy	.297	.032	.323	9.309	<.001
	Guilt	.096	.029	.114	3.361	<.001
	Israeli Jew identity	-.039	.033	-.036	-1.195	.233
	Religiosity	-.045	.021	-.066	-2.191	.029
	Political belonging right/centre/left	.108	.022	.163	4.954	<.001
	Income	-.002	.016	-.003	-.128	.898
	Education	-.003	.016	-.005	-.205	.838
	Age	.005	.002	.063	2.360	.019
	Gender	.089	.086	.028	1.041	.298

a. Dependent Variable: Positive politics

Tab. 4 - ANOVA of the regression model to test H3 (Positive policies)

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ANOVA – Dependent variable: Positive policies						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	512.545	13	39.427	74.211	<.001 ^b
	Residual	295.919	557	.531		
	Total	808.465	570			
b. Predictors: (Constant), Hate, Anger, Fear, Hope, Empathy, Guilt, Israeli Jew identity, Religiosity, Income, Education, Age, Gender, Political belonging right/centre/left						

Tab. 4.1 - ANOVA of the regression model to test H3 (Positive policies)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.796 ^a	.634	.625	.729
a. Predictors: (Constant), Hate, Anger, Fear, Hope, Empathy, Guilt, Israeli Jew identity, Religiosity, Income, Education, Age, Gender, Political belonging right/centre/left				

Tab. 4.2 – Model Summary of the regression model to test H3 (Positive policies)

The ANOVA and Model Summary confirm the significance presenting similar results, with a reasonable standard error of the estimate (.729).

In this model hate remains highly statistically significant, showing a strong negative correlation with the support to positive policies, suggesting that as hate increases, the support to conflict-moderating policies decreases. Similarly to the previous model, hate is the “negative” emotion that is the most significantly correlated to the dependent variable ($p < .001$), indicating a large gap from the effect of anger, which can also be considered significant ($p = .016$) but not as strongly as hate, if we look at the standardized coefficients (Hate = $-.212$ vs Anger = $-.074$)

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Concerning “constructive” emotions, as expected from the previous model’s results data show a highly significant positive correlation between empathy and support to positive policies, suggesting that as empathy increases, the support to conflict-moderating policies also increases. Differently from the previous model, in this case all constructive emotions appear to be significant predictors of the dependent variable. However, the standardized coefficient for hope (.143) and guilt (.114) are both much lower than empathy’s coefficient (.323), suggesting that empathy has anyways a stronger impact in predicting support to positive policies.

Concerning the items associated to personal values, in this model the political belonging is confirmed to be a significant predictor, as it indicates a positive and significant correlation with the dependent variable. This result suggests that leftists are associated with more support to positive policies, while conservative political opinion are more likely to predict lack of support for conflict-moderating policies. However, the perception of the identity as Israeli Jew does not show any significant impact, while a higher-level of religiosity seems to be only slightly correlated to increased support to positive policies (Beta = -.066, $p = .029$).

Socio-demographic items, in particular income, education and gender, also show no significant impact on support to positive policies. Age instead seems to be slightly positive correlated with the dependent variable, suggesting that older age is associated with more positive political view. Even if the correlation is statistically significant but not very strong (Beta = .063, $p = .019$), it’s still interesting to notice this aspect because older age is generally associated to more conservative view, and conservative views in both our models are correlated with the opposite policy support outcome (positive correlation with negative policies, and negative correlation with positive policies).

4.2.4. Survey analysis conclusions

Our models demonstrate that hate is a significant predictor of support for policy attitudes above and beyond other emotions and factors, particularly when it comes to influence the support to negative conflict-promoting policies. In fact, while hate and empathy both emerge as key predictors of policy support, hate has a stronger overall impact if we consider the result of both models together. In fact, hate is the strongest predictor of support for negative policies, showing the highest coefficient of both models with a significant difference with the other emotions' coefficients. Moreover, it is also strongly correlated with the lack of support for positive policies, with the second higher coefficient after empathy, even if in the opposite direction. Thus, the findings confirm our hypothesis according to which increasing hate correlates with increasing support for negative policies and decreasing of support for positive conflict-moderating policies. Empathy shows a similar pattern to hate, but its coefficient is consistently slightly lower in the corresponding model. This suggests that empathy has a slightly lower power to influence higher support to positive policies or lack of support to negative policies than hate can positively affect support to negative policies or lack of support to positive policies. However, this difference is particularly visible only when taking into consideration the normal coefficients (B) and it becomes much less noticeable when comparing the two standardized coefficients (Beta), therefore this topic would need further investigations to be properly assessed.

Interestingly, hate is the only negative emotion among the ones studied that show a significant impact on policy support attitudes, although anger and fear appear to be the most commonly felt emotions among Israeli Jews surveyed. This suggests that the predominant emotions are not necessarily the most influential, as the specific characteristics of the emotion may play a role. Additionally, although data shows that political affiliation also plays a role in shaping policy support,

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associating right-wing views with conflict-promoting policies and left-wing views with conflict-moderating policies, the feeling of hate consistently show a stronger influence than political belonging in influencing support to policy attitudes. However, political belonging has a stronger impact than empathy in influencing support to negative policies, and a higher power to affect support to positive policies than hope and guilt, which confirms that it should still be considered an important predictor for policy support attitudes in this model.

As for the other socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, income, and education, they show consistently show no correlation with policy attitudes, indicating that they do not have a significant impact on policy support in this context.

5. HATE THROUGH PUBLIC SPEECH - ISRAELI AUTHORITIES AT THE UNITED NATIONS

After describing the historical and theoretical context, we can now dive into the analysis of the speeches held in front of the UN Security Council by the Israeli representative Gilad Erdan (October 2023 – August 2024) and by the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the UN general assembly during or shortly after one of the Gaza wars (2009, 2014, 2024), when emotions and hostility are often at their peak. These texts will be used to assess our last two hypothesis, specifically the use of hate speech elements to against Hamas and the Palestinians to foster support for the aggressive policies during the current Gaza war (H4) and whether this attitude can constitute a pattern of the political discourse concerning Isreal-Hamas conflicts in Gaza (H5).

As mentioned before, we will analyse the speeches using a combination of the five-step framework of Richer et al (2008) combined with elements of critical discourse analyses to identify the strategies that could generate outgroup hate in the audience, including the use of common themes and patterns.

More in detail, we will consider whether these speeches align with the elements that can lead to the celebration of "evil", in particular defining the ingroup, excluding the outgroup, and emphasizing outgroup threat alongside ingroup virtue. In the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, these steps can mostly be overlapped with the main elements of Van Dijk's "Ideological Square", which opposes ingroup favouritism (emphasizing all of the ingroup's positive aspects and de-emphasizing the negative ones) and outgroup derogation (emphasizing all of the ingroup's negative aspects and de-emphasizing the positive ones). In terms of linguistic choices (part of critical discourse analysis) particular, we will make reference to some processes that are typical of Michael Halliday's Systemic

Functional Linguistics framework, as reported by Gebhard & Accurso (2020). These include, among others, expressions of Material processes (doing, happening), Mental processes (thinking, feeling, perceiving), Relational processes (being, having) and Verbal processes (saying, expressing). While material processes are external and observable, the others capture internal states, static relationships, or communication, offering distinct ways to represent human experience in language.

5.1. HOSTILE DIPLOMATIC DISCOURSE

After giving a first reading to the whole set of transcripts that compose our corpus, one of the most noticeable things is that both Erdan's and Netanyahu's speeches are all very similar and repetitive in terms of structure and content, including the choice of words and evocative images used. The Israeli authorities expose in very assertive way all that is positive about the Israeli ingroup and all that is negative about their opponent, Hamas, aligning with both Van Dijk's Ideological square and Reicher's framework. The tone used is particularly remarkable, as it is much more direct and stronger than what would be expected in the context of the UN assemblies.

In fact, diplomatic discourse is known to be not only persuading but also dissimulating, as it serves as a tool for shaping a nation's public image and positioning it on the global stage (Pimentel & Panke, 2020). In fact, diplomatic discourse is normally based on mediation and characterized by formality, politeness and a general attention to cultural sensitivity, in order to ensure respect and avoid offensive statement that might compromise the image of their own nation. For this reason, diplomats often prefer neutral or ambiguous language to maintain flexibility and openness, and they usually avoid emotionally charged or confrontational statements using calm and measured tones as a way to persuade others by focusing on shared values and mutual benefits. One of the main goals of diplomacy is to reduce misunderstandings and settle disagreements through negotiation, in the attempt to build

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mutual understanding and create a productive environment for advancing a nation's goals and agenda. In this context, international forums such as the UN General Assembly are normally considered particularly important, as they are seen as effective ways to achieve diplomatic goals by helping countries not only to shape their own image, but also to gently spread their own national propaganda on a global level (Pokhrel, 2020).

However, the tone used in the diplomatic speeches analysed in this study is radically different for both Erdan and Netanyahu. This is particularly evident in the speeches held by Erdan, who has an exceptionally aggressive and dramatic communication style that implies a raging tone of voice, the use of violent and graphic metaphors, and direct heavy accusations towards anyone who does not completely support Israeli's actions, including the UN members. Erdan repeatedly defines himself "disgusted" by UN members and representatives' behaviour, putting particular emphasis on the notion of shame. Here are some examples found on texts:

"What is going on here? I am truly shocked and horrified. I truly do not understand what is going on. The most barbaric and wide-scale terror attack in decades — bigger than the 11 September attacks — was perpetrated 11 days ago, and it seems that the Council has already forgotten" (Erdan, 18 Oct 2023)

"the world is still waiting to hear from UN-Women a clear public condemnation of Hamas sexual crimes. Shame on UN-Women" (Erdan, 22 Nov 2023)

"The United Nations is one of the main driving forces for the sick phenomena we are seeing now. From the 7 October atrocity denial to the denial of rape and sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas, the United Nations is an accomplice of terror organizations and antisemites" (Erdan, 29 Dec 2023)

"The list of different United Nations agencies and bodies that have been that have been weaponized against Israel is endless, but of all the anti-Israel organs at the United Nations, there is one that puts all the others to shame, and that is the Human Rights Council" (Erdan, 12 Jan 2024)

"Today in Gaza, UNRWA is Hamas, and Hamas is UNRWA" (Erdan, 18 Apr 2024)

"Sadly, it is for the same reason that Council members can condemn terror attacks in Russia and Iran, but not in Israel — to the Council, Israeli blood is cheap. This is a travesty, and I am disgusted" (Erdan, 25 Mar 2024)

"But to those who gave that denial of the Holocaust a hearing, I say on behalf of my people, the Jewish people, and of decent people everywhere: Have they no shame? Have they no decency? A mere six decades after the Holocaust, they give legitimacy to a man who denies the murder of 6 million Jews, while promising to wipe out the State of Israel, the State of the Jews. That is a disgrace" (Netanyahu, 2009)

"By these twisted standards, the Human Rights Council would have dragged Roosevelt and Churchill to the dock as war criminals. What a perversion of truth! What a perversion of justice!" (Netanyahu, 2009)

"Those of you who stand with these war criminals, those of you who stand with evil against good, with the curse against the blessing, those of you who do so should be ashamed of yourselves" (Netanyahu, 2024)

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This hostile communication strategy that includes a constant and direct attempt to shame the UN General Assembly and Security Council members might seem inappropriate to achieve the main goal of the Israeli authorities, which is achieving the needed international support to maintain their military actions in Palestinian territories. In fact, as argued by Weiss-Klayman, Hameiri & Halperin (2020), group-based shame does not hold the same “constructive” action tendency as group-based guilt, even if the two emotions share a lot of characteristics. In fact, even if both guilt and shame stem from the perception of a wrongdoing committed by the ingroup, group-based guilt normally arise when the blamed action is seen as unjust or illegitimate, while group-based shame happens when the wrongdoing damages the group's image. For this reason, in the context of intergroup conflict guilt is normally associated with a higher support for reparation policies as a form of apology for the unjust behaviour, while shame tends to be associated with avoidance and distancing from the situation that caused the shame.

This attitude combined with an aggressive communication style that would normally be considered not appropriate for a diplomatic environment, would seemingly create an unwanted reaction from the international community, creating a negative image of Israel and preventing the development of the empathy that would be necessary to foster a constructive supportive action by the UN members. However, it would be difficult to expect that an experienced politician such as Netanyahu would not consider such implications.

Looking at the situation from another point of view, this communication choice might actually seem strategic. In fact, sharply emphasising an alleged contradictory and biased position of the UN towards the events of the Gaza conflict might represent not only an attempt to delegitimize the crime accusations against Netanyahu's government, but also to accentuate Israeli's victimhood narrative which constitutes the base of Israel propaganda to justify their violent military actions.

5.2. VICTIMHOOD THROUGH HISTORICAL COLLECTIVE JEWISH TRAUMA

One of the key themes in Netanyahu's and Erdan's speeches is the portrayal of victimhood, used to define the ingroup (Israel), exclude and blame the outgroup (Hamas) by labelling them as threat, foster international support, and justify Israeli's military actions. This is achieved largely through repeated parallels between the Holocaust and the Gaza conflicts, emphasizing a narrative of Jewish victimhood and resilience. In fact, as reported by Rababah & Hamdan (2019), parallelism is a figure of speech that can often be used to emphasise all the negative characteristics of the outgroup, considered as an enemy. In fact, parallelism is not only used as a mean to identify the ingroup with positive image, but also to transfer to the opposing outgroups a series of negative connotations to highlight the perceived threats posed by outgroups, while also deflecting the attention from the ingroup actions. This also aligns with Hodges' (2007) concept of "adequation," where similarities are imposed on others for political purposes.

In the analysed speeches, both Netanyahu and Erdan frequently rely on historical parallels to frame the modern Israeli experiences and threats within the broader context of collective Jewish victimhood, making constant references to historical persecution, especially the Holocaust and World War II, to strengthen their narrative. Each one of the considered speeches mentions either the Nazis, the Holocaust, Hitler, or other references of that dark period of Human history. Here, collective historical trauma is used to shape and reinforce the collective identity of Israeli people, characterised by a constant shared struggle against genocidal forces, and to tie present dangers to past traumas. In fact, a constant parallelism between the Holocaust and the Hamas attacks in Gaza, mentioning Nazi atrocities and invoking phrases like "Never Again," allow Erdan and Netanyahu to connect Israeli actions to a deeper existential need for Jewish preservation, presenting them as a continuation of efforts to prevent history from repeating itself.

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For example, on the speech delivered to the UN Security Council on November 10th, 2023, which is the anniversary of Kristallnacht (November 9-10, 1938), Erdan draws a direct line from that violent anti-Jewish pogrom to recent atrocities, calling it another “pogrom” that is now part of the “collective trauma of the Jewish people.” He uses the remembrance of Kristallnacht to emphasize that just as the world was silent then, the international community and the United Nations have failed to condemn Hamas’s atrocities with the necessary urgency. Erdan repeatedly criticizes the international community’s insufficient response, comparing it to the silence during the Holocaust, depicted as a form of complicity. This “silence” and inaction of the UN bodies, that are accused to fail to take concrete actions against condemn Hamas and take the side of Isreal, amplify the ingroup’s victimhood narrative by positioning Israel’s need for self-defense within a larger historical context of abandonment. Some examples:

“Hamas proceeded to convert every inch of the Gaza Strip into a war machine. Where was the Council then? Where was the Council when Hamas exploited the billions of dollars of international aid to embed terror infrastructure within and below densely populated residential areas? Where was the United Nations? The United Nations knew all of this, but it remained silent.” (Erdan, 18 Oct 2023)

“When their bodies were burned together with those of millions of children, Jewish and others, the world was silent. Today, after innocent Jewish babies have been burned alive, the Council is still silent” (Erdan, 30 Oct 2023)

“We will walk with a yellow star as a symbol of pride, a reminder that we swore to fight back to defend ourselves. “Never again” is now. In the face of the silence at the United Nations, our enemies have been emboldened. They have seen the General Assembly applauding efforts to prevent the Jews from defending themselves” (Erdan, 30 Oct 2023)

“Yet faced with an absolutely clear-cut case of aggressor and victim, who do you think the United Nations Human Rights Council decided to condemn? Israel. A democracy legitimately defending itself against terror is morally hanged, drawn and quartered, and given an unfair trial to boot.” (Netanyahu, 2009)

Erdan even uses personal family anecdotes to tie his own lineage to the shared historical suffering of the Jewish people and induce empathy in the audience. Netanyahu (2009) also uses this strategy when speaking about the actions committed by Iran (also compared to Hamas): *“Nearly every Jewish family, including my own, was affected. My wife’s grandparents, her father’s two sisters and three brothers, and all the aunts, uncles and cousins were murdered by the Nazis”*. This technique is also used to compare the present attacks to Holocaust atrocities. In fact, Erdan describes Israeli villages attacked by Hamas as peaceful,

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agricultural settlements that were “exterminated” in a manner that reminds him of his grandfather’s village (Erdan, 30 Oct 2023). By paralleling these recent events with the Holocaust, Erdan emphasizes the perception of an ongoing threat that bridges past and present, highlighting that whole families in Israel were “turned to smoke and ash” by Hamas, in the same way that his own family members were murdered in Nazi gas chambers.

We can find the same type of parallelism even in Nethanyahu’s speeches. Some examples:

“Thousands of Iranian-backed Hamas terrorists from Gaza burst into Israel in pickup trucks and on motorcycles, and they committed unimaginable atrocities. They savagely murdered 1,200 people. They raped and mutilated women. They beheaded men. They burned babies alive. They burned entire families alive—babies, children, parents, grandparents. It seems reminiscent of the Nazi Holocaust” (Netanyahu, 2014)

“Just imagine, for those who say Hamas has to stay, it has to be part of a post-war Gaza— imagine, in a post-war situation after World War II, allowing the defeated Nazis in 1945 to rebuild Germany? It’s inconceivable. It’s ridiculous. It didn’t happen then, and it’s not going to happen now. This is why Israel will reject any role for Hamas in a post-war Gaza” (Netanyahu, 2024)

5.3. PARALLELISMS TO PORTRAY HAMAS AS A GLOBAL THREAT

The kind of parallelism outlined above is a clear example of how elements of the ingroup’s collective trauma presented through victimhood can simultaneously be used to strengthen ingroup’s cohesion and improve their public image (emphasize ingroup’s positive aspects), justify military action framing it as self-defence (de-emphasise ingroup’s negative aspects) and transfer to the outgroup the characteristics of intractable evil entities (emphasize outgroup negative aspects) depriving them from the possibility to be associated to anything virtuous (de-emphasize outgroup’s positive aspects).

This is perfectly in line with the “Ideological square” of van Dijk, with both Netanyahu and Erdan highlighting all that is good about their victimized ingroup, Israeli people, and highlight everything that is bad about their opponents, Hamas. For example, Erdan calls Hamas "sheer evil" with a genocidal ideology, while Netanyahu emphasizes that "Israel has been attacked and continues to be

attacked.", framing presents Hamas as the aggressor and Israel as a victim and setting up a clear contrast between the two sides.

Considering the material processes (actions), Hamas is shown as the group responsible for violent acts, like firing rockets at Israel and kidnapping or killing Israeli people. Israel, on the other hand, is described as a passive victim of these attacks by Hamas. The negative and hostile characteristics of Hamas are emphasised through direct accusation and parallelisms to associate them with the features of commonly recognized "evil" entities, such as barbaric savages, kidnappers, murderers, rapists, baby-killers, Nazis and Islamic terrorists.

For instance, both Erdan and Netanyahu repeatedly defines Hamas as "modern-day Nazis" referring to their "identical genocidal ideologies" and their shared commitment to a "Judenrein" (Jew-free) Israel. Moreover, Erdan highlights the Hamas charter, which calls for the obliteration of Israel and elimination of Jews, comparing its language to Hitler's "Mein Kampf." He suggests this document is essentially a modern "action plan" for a Holocaust-like extermination, framing Hamas's ideology as a mirror image of Nazi ideology.

The topic of rape and harm to innocent and helpless civilians, which can be considered a very common way to depict an outgroup as a threat (Reicher et al, 2008), is also very recurrent in both Erdan and Netanyahu's speeches, even if with different tones. In fact, Netanyahu tends to be less graphic than Erdan, whose description of events can sometimes resemble a scene from a horror movie:

"Hamas Nazis deliberately sliced open a pregnant woman's belly, removed her foetus and stabbed it before its mother's eyes while she was still alive." (Erdan, 30 Oct 2023)

The violence of these images reveals a clear intention to shock and disturb the audience in order to activate an immediate and strong emotional response, such as immediate hate, as a mean to further

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emphasize Hamas' evil nature to boost the international community to recognize Israel as a victim and take their side in the conflict.

Furthermore, Hamas is even depicted as causing harm not only to Israel, but also to their own people, the Palestinian civilians, by using them as "human shields". This further emphasises the unchangeable evil nature of Hamas that can be typically associated to the development of feelings of hate (see Chapter 1).

"Nothing can change a genocidal ideology. There is only one way to cure a cancer, and it is the evisceration of every cancerous cell." (Erdan, 16 Oct 2023)

At the same time, this is also used by the Israeli authorities to highlight their human and virtuous nature by showing concern and sorrow for the civilians. In fact, in some of the Netanyahu's speeches, Palestinian civilians tend to not be directly associated with Hamas as a way to show tolerance and openness to a diplomatic solution of the conflict, while disguising the intention to have full control over the Palestinians territories. Netanyahu also highlights the differences between Hamas and their other Arab "neighbours" that are open to work towards reconciliation:

"Any time an Arab leader genuinely wanted peace with us, we made peace" (Netanyahu, 2009)

"We want to live side by side with them — two free peoples living in peace, living in prosperity, living in dignity. Peace, prosperity and dignity require one other element: we must have security. The Palestinians should have all the powers to govern themselves except a handful of powers that could endanger Israel. That is why the Palestinian State must be effectively demilitarized" (Netanyahu, 2009)

"This is the map I presented here last year. It's a map of a blessing. It shows Israel and its Arab partners forming a land bridge connecting Asia and Europe" (Netanyahu, 2024)



Fig. 2 Netanyahu at the UN General Assembly (27 Sep 2024)

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However, this is sharply in contract with the words spoken by Erdan during some of his speeches, where Hamas is depicted as a direct representation of the Palestinians people, as the majority of them deliberately chose to support the leadership of Hamas during the elections.

“if Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people, as President Abbas stated just yesterday, it is puzzling that his representative is present in this meeting, let alone voicing an opinion on behalf of the people in Gaza who elected the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS)- like Hamas murderers in Gaza 17 years ago” (Erdan, 16 Oct 2023)

Here we can see that Erdan not only implies and boosts the association of all Palestinians with Hamas, but also positions Hamas (and consequently, Palestinians) within the category of “militant Islam” which include various terrorist organisations such as ISIS and Hezbollah.

“Hamas is ISIS and ISIS is Hamas. And what they share in common, all militant Islamists share in common. [...] Hamas’s immediate goal is to destroy Israel; but it has a broader objective. It also wants a caliphate. Hamas shares the global ambitions of its fellow militant Islamists, and that is why its supporters cheered wildly in the streets of Gaza when thousands of Americans were murdered on 9/11. (Netanyahu, 2014)

This parallelism with Islamic terrorist groups, particularly feared by the international community, further helps the Israeli authorities to constructs Hamas as part of a unified and dangerous global enemy, suggesting that its actions extend beyond Israel and constitute a danger to the international community.

This narrative aligns with persistent parallels drawn by Netanyahu and Likud representatives between Palestinians and supporters of Islamic terrorist organizations. Their rhetoric reinforces the idea that any Palestinian state would inevitably become a hub for terrorism, threatening not only Israel’s security but also global stability. By equating Hamas with Nazism and militant Islam, Israeli authorities explicitly position Hamas and its Palestinian supporters as “threat to our existence”, which would not be limited to Isreal, but potentially extended to the whole world.

5.4. INGROUP VIRTUE

After defining Hamas as a global threat, both Erdan and Netanyahu can easily frame Israel's actions as defensive and necessary, painting a picture of a nation taking justified steps to protect the people from the "barbaric Hamas Nazi" and "terror monsters". This strategy of portraying the outgroup as a global threat can be considered another example of Van Dijk's concept of the "Ideological Square," where negative traits of the outgroup are emphasized to justify actions against them. This is not only achieved through the victimhood narrative, which positions Isreal as a passive target of aggression, but also by highlighting the virtuosity of Isreal to define a sharp moral difference between the ingroup and Hamas.

"We prefer to take proactive steps because, unlike Hamas and United Nations bodies, we cherish life and hold it sacred"
(Erdan, 10 Nov 2023)

Thus, we can eventually notice a transition in narrative in the speeches of both Isreal representatives when it comes to focusing on Isreal actions, shifting from mere victimhood to a strong emphasis of Israel's moral superiority and ability to defend itself. In fact, Israel's actions during the war are described as careful and humane, in contrast with the "inhuman atrocities" of Hamas. Both Netanyahu and Erdan address that Israel takes every possible measure to minimize harm to civilians, in contrast to Hamas, which is accused of using civilians as human shields. For example, they use material processes like "dropped flyers," "made phone calls," and "sent text messages" show that Israel took care to warn civilians before attacks, as opposed to Hamas choice to deliberately target Israeli civilians, such as the young people attending a music festival during the attacks of October 7th. These actions make Israel appear as a considerate and moral actor, focused on protecting innocent lives even in the face of war.

That was no easy task because the terrorts were firing their missiles from homes and schools, using mosques as weapons depots and missile caches, and ferreting explosives in ambulances. Israel, by contrast, tried to minimize casualties by urging Palestinian civilians to vacate the targeted areas. We dropped countless flyers over their homes. We sent thousands and thousands of text messages to the Palestinian residents. We made thousands and thousands of cellular

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phone calls urging them to vacate, to leave. Never has a country gone to such extraordinary lengths to remove the enemy's civilian population from harm's way (Netanyahu, 2009)

Moreover, both Israeli representatives also emphasize Israel's regret over civilian casualties through mental processes. They mention Israel's feelings of pity and sadness and for lives lost, which humanizes the Israeli nation and shows it as caring and honorable. By presenting Israel as a defender of both Israeli people and international values, both speakers highlight the role of Israel as a moral and responsible country.

I wish to begin by expressing Israel's sorrow over the tragic incident that claimed the lives of the World Central Kitchen employees in Gaza. We express our deepest condolences, and our hearts go out to the families, their countries and the World Central Kitchen. That was a tragic mistake. Israel never targets civilians deliberately — never [...] The military's standard of operating procedure was violated, but it was the result of a tragic mistake made owing to Hamas's cynical modus operandi of exploiting civilian infrastructure and vehicles" (Erdan, 5 Apr 2024)

This moral distinction is made clear even by the way Israel and Hamas are described. For instance, Israel is defined not only as a "law-abiding democracy," but most importantly "a nation on a rescue mission," and "a protector of innocent civilians.". Both Erdan and Netanyahu also highlight how "Israel did not start this war, nor did Israel want this war" (Erden, 25 March 2024) and that, contrary to Hamas, all Israel want is peace.

"And if the Palestinians truly want peace, my Government and I, and my people, will make peace. But we want a genuine peace, a defensible peace, a permanent peace" (Netanyahu, 2009)

"The people of Israel pray for peace, but our hopes for peace, and those of the world, are in danger, because everywhere we look militant Islam is on the march" (Netanyahu, 2014)

"From the day of Israel's establishment, we have shown that we are a willing partner for peace. Seventysix years ago, we accepted General Assembly resolution 181 (II), while the Palestinians rejected it, just as they rejected every other peace plan ever presented, be it by Clinton, Obama or any other President. Israel was delighted to sign the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, the Abraham Accords. That is because Israel strives for peace, while the Palestinians strive for war and terror." (Erden 29 Nov 2023)

On the other hand, as we can see, Hamas is portrayed as a "barbaric force" that glorifies death and commits atrocities. Palestinians in general are also accused to be born in such conditions:

"So many Gazan children were born into a culture of hate — a culture that glorifies violence and educates kids to murder. It is a death cult that puts martyrdom ahead of life, coexistence and the pursuit of peace" (Erden, 22 Nov 2023).

This sharp contrast made through parallelism and semantic opposites can be considered another example of Van Dijk ideological square, where the ingroup (Israel) is portrayed as a protector of civilization and morality, while the outgroup (Hamas) represents barbarism and evil.

5.5. CELEBRATION OF ISREALI AGGRESSIVE ACTIONS

Until here, in our set of speeches we found exhaustive evidence of the first four steps of the framework developed by Reicher et al. (2008): ingroup definition, outgroup exclusion, definition of the outgroup as an evil threat, and emphasis of ingroup virtue. These four steps alone would not be sufficient to define a case of “celebration of evil” as a way to justify and boost hatred.

However, the content of our set of speeches goes far beyond that, showing perfect examples of a glorification of hatred and hostile actions frames as the defence of virtue.

In fact, in the speeches of Erdan and Netanyahu the theme of self-defense is further reinforced by portraying Israel as a strong and mighty entity.

“But I have a message for you: Israel will win this battle. We will win this battle because we don’t have a choice. After generations in which our people were slaughtered, remorselessly butchered, and no one raised a finger in our defense, we now have a state. We now have a brave army, an army of incomparable courage, and we are defending ourselves” (Netanyahu, 2024)

“Israel will not accept having our hands tied while we are fighting for our security and our children’s future (Erdan, 10 November 2023)

“Jerusalem — united Jerusalem — will never fall again, no matter how many times our enemies attempt to destroy us, no matter how many times the United Nations slanders us and distorts reality. We will stay in our homeland and we will prevail (Erdan, 13 Aug 2024)

Netanyahu often highlights Israel’s actions and strategic initiatives, describing them in active terms. Statements like “we will stand strong and defend ourselves” depict Israel as a proactive agent, prepared to confront and overcome its adversaries, not anymore as a passive victim. Statements like

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"we must obliterate Hamas for self-preservation" and "Israel must defend itself" show how they emphasize Israel's strength and determination.

This narrative aligns with material processes, such as "defend ourselves" and "expose their lies," which showcase Israel as a capable and influential champion of justice. In fact, as the discourse develops, Erdan and Netanyahu incorporate elements of glorification, celebrating Israel's achievements, resilience, and morality.

"I am proud that my country, Israel, is at the forefront of many of those advances in science and technology, medicine and biology, agriculture and water, and energy and the environment. Those innovations in my country and in many others offer humanity a sunlit future of unimagined promise" (Netanyahu 2009)

"I have been immensely proud to represent my country — the most moral country in the world — at the United Nations, in this warped placed."(Erdan, 13 Aug 2024)

These examples show how Israel's positive contributions to the world are highlighted, reinforce the position of the ingroup as leading force for good.

Another critical element in both Erdan and Netanyahu's set of speeches is the framing of Israel as a bastion of civilization in contrast to their "savage" and "barbaric" adversaries. They frequently compare Israel's "civilised" values with the barbarity of Hamas, by using either direct attributes or phrases like "we cherish life" and they "glorify death." This dichotomy not only emphasizes Israel's moral and ethical superiority but also situates its struggles within a broader, universal fight between civilization and savagery.

"And here's the truth: Israel seeks peace. Israel yearns for peace. Israel has made peace and will make peace again. Yet we face savage enemies who seek our annihilation, and we must defend ourselves against them. These savage murderers, our enemies, seek not only to destroy us but to destroy our common civilization and return us to a dark age of tyranny and terror." (Netanyahu, Sep 2024)

In the name of this virtuous mission, both Erdan and Netanyahu frequently speak about the necessity to destroy Hamas in order to preserve moral and societal values. This is explicitly mentioned

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in various passages of the oral texts produced by both Israeli representatives, not only in the framework of the current Gaza conflict started after October 7th 2023 but also in previous times.

Some examples:

"For the safety of our people and the security of our future, Israel must obliterate Hamas first." (Erdan, 16 Oct 2023)

"Humanitarian corridors will not prevent the next atrocity. The only thing that will is the utter obliteration of that satanic entity" (Erdan, 18 Oct 2023)

"Calling for a ceasefire is no different than calling off D-Day in 1944. Israel's operation in Gaza is an act of self-defense to ensure its future." (Erdan, 30 Oct 2023):

Calling for both a ceasefire and peace is a paradox. Humanitarian aid is very important. But more food, water and medical supplies will not bring us closer to a solution. Hamas does not care about the people in Gaza. All they are interested in is implementing Hitler's "final solution", and nothing can change a genocidal ideology; it must be uprooted and eradicated (Erdan, 29 Nov 2023)

To protect the peace and security of the world, we must remove that cancer before it is too late (Netanyahu, 2014)

As we can see, Israeli authorities repeatedly identify Hamas as a branch of a larger network of evil, emphasizing that it represents a fanatical ideology glorifying death, arguing that destroying Hamas is essential not only for Israel's self-defense but also to safeguard the global human values of life, peace, and freedom. In this way, maintaining the conflict in Gaza to seek the annihilation of Hamas is not framed as a negative aggressive behaviour, but rather presented as a moral imperative for global virtue and responsibility. In this framework, standing with Israel means standing with virtue and civilization:

"Will the Assembly stand with Israel or will it stand with the terrorists?" (Netanyahu, 2009)

"When you stand with Israel, you stand for your own values and your own interests. Yes, we're defending ourselves, but we're also defending you against a common enemy that, through violence and terror, seeks to destroy our way of life". (Netanyahu, 2024)

This narrative perfectly aligns with the fifth step of Reicher's framework (2008), which involves the ingroup's celebration of their own evil actions framed as defence and preservation of virtue, propagating hate towards their opponents to dissimulate and justify their own aggressive actions

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[H4]. Considering the speeches of Netanyahu, we can also see that this attitude is not only evident in the context of the current Gaza conflict, but it is part of a broader discourse strategy that has been perpetuated for many years [H5] at least more than a decade as for our data sources.

CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration the data analysed throughout this paper, we can conclude that this study helps to highlight the significant role hate plays in influencing public support for conflict-promoting policies within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses, we have demonstrated that hate not only emerges as a strong predictor of support for conflict-promoting policies against Palestinians among Israeli Jews, but it is also deliberately utilised in Israeli authorities' political discourse to shape public opinion and foster support for aggressive policies and actions, including the destruction of Hamas.

The quantitative analysis of survey data confirms that hate operates distinctively compared to other emotions, such as anger or fear, in its capacity to foster support for aggressive measures. Unlike other emotions, hate is characterized by its enduring nature, often tied to chronic emotional sentiments and relies on the perceived evil and unchangeable nature of the outgroup, which is believed to only want to cause harm.

This is particularly highlighted in the Israeli's political discourse, in a constat comparison between the "evil" enemy, Hamas, and the "virtuous" victim, Israeli Jews. In fact, we could see that both Netanyahu and Erdan were effectively using historical narratives of victimhood and existential threat to frame the outgroup as inherently malevolent and dangerous. This framing serves not only to justify aggressive actions, which goes as far as committing war crimes and genocide, but also to solidify ingroup cohesion and loyalty by portraying such actions as moral imperatives for self-defence.

The deliberate use of hate in public discourse constitutes a significant challenge for peacebuilding, as it deepens the distance between groups and diminishes the willingness to engage in reconciliation. Moreover, the qualitative analysis of the speeches of the Israeli authorities at the United Nations also reveals not only that hate is employed in the political during the course of the most recent Gaza

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conflict, but also that those strategies have been systematically mobilized as a rhetorical tool throughout the years, repeating the same concepts over and over in order to convey their message more effectively. The repetitiveness of the speeches by the Israeli authorities is also highlighted by the emblematic words of Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian issue, addressing to the UN General Assembly³⁴ :

“I always experience a sense of shock and delusion when I come to this room because many of you recite the same script you had in front of ourselves last year. Of course we condemn the Hamas attack. Of course we expressed solidarity with the Israeli victims. Of course we demand the release of the hostages, both the Israelis and the Palestinians. But is it possible that after 42,000 people killed, you cannot empathize with the Palestinians? Those of you that have not uttered a word about what is happening in Gaza demonstrate that empathy has evaporated from this room. And empathy is the glue that makes us stand united as humanity.”

(F. Albanese, October 2024)

By studying how emotions like hate connect to public opinion and policy support, this paper helps us to better understand the mechanisms that behind the long endurance of intractable conflicts, highlighting the dual role of hate as both an emotional driver and a strategic resource in these situations. Future work should focus on finding ways to reduce hate’s impact and build support for more peaceful approaches to conflict, for example through fostering empathy.

³⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1095719362064762>

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