Resistance and flexibility to compromise over sacred values

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Findings

1. Resistance to measuring SV’s along an instrumental scale
   • The more salient such attempts, the greater the moral outrage and support for violent opposition
   • Thus better deals can have worse results
   • Contrast between strong preferences and SVs

2. SVs do not have infinite value
   • Amenable to trade-offs with other SVs
Finding 1: resistance to trade-offs over SVs

- Sample: 720 Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza.
- Recruited across 14 campuses
- Individual interviews
- Half members of Hamas or PIJ
- Two experiments compared reactions of moral absolutists versus non absolutists
Measuring SVs

“Do you agree that there are some extreme circumstances where it would be permissible for the Palestinian people to compromise over ______ …”

Yes  Don’t Know/Unsure  No

• “No” indicates SV, issue/resource more than a preference
• Asked about right of return and Jerusalem
Experiment 1

• **Taboo deal:** “Suppose the United Nations organized a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians. Under this treaty Palestinians would recognize the sacred and historic right of the Jewish people to Israel. There would be two states - a Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state in 99% of the West Bank and Gaza.”

• **Taboo+:** “On their part, Israel will pay Palestine 1 billion dollars a year for 10 years.’
Violence

[Graph showing the comparison between Non Absolutists and Moral Absolutists across two categories: Taboo and Taboo+. The graph indicates a trend with Non Absolutists having higher scores on Taboo and lower on Taboo+, while Moral Absolutists show a reverse trend.]
Anger & Disgust

![Graph showing the comparison between Non Absolutists and Moral Absolutists in terms of Anger & Disgust levels between Taboo and Taboo+ conditions. The graph indicates a rising trend for Moral Absolutists and a falling trend for Non Absolutists.]
Experiment 2

- **Taboo**: Suppose the United Nations has proposed a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians. This would be a two state solution, resulting in a Jewish State of Israel and a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza. Under this deal Palestinians would agree to give up their sovereignty over East Jerusalem.

- **Taboo+**: On their part, Israel will pay each Palestinian family one thousand US dollars a year for 10 years in economic assistance.
Violence

![Graph showing the relationship between Taboo and Taboo+ for Non Absolutists and Moral Absolutists.](image-url)
Anger & Disgust

The graph shows the comparison of Anger & Disgust between Non Absolutists and Moral Absolutists. The x-axis represents 'Taboo' and 'Taboo+', while the y-axis ranges from -0.2 to 0.4. The data points indicate a notable difference in the emotional responses between the two groups.
Replicable finding

• Other samples: Jewish settlers, Palestinian refugees

• Other topics: right of return (refugees), giving up land (settlers)

• Other material incentives: more money, life free of violence
Finding 2: flexibility over SVs

• Two experiments testing hypothesis that moral absolutists should show greater flexibility over SVs if adversary makes symbolic compromises over their own SVs
• Appearance that one SV is being traded off for another rather than for material benefit
Experiment 1: Israeli Settlers

- Surveyed rep sample of settlers in August ‘05, days before Gaza disengagement
- Approx 50% of those surveyed were moral absolutists regarding the “Land of Israel” to be a SV
Anger & Disgust: Settlers

**Taboo:** “Israel would give up 99% of Judea and Samaria. Israel will not absorb ANY refugees. There would be two states - a Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state.”

**Symbolic:** “On their part, Palestinians will give up any claims to the “right of return” - which is sacred to them”
Violence: Settlers

**Taboo:** “Israel would give up 99% of Judea and Samaria. Israel will not absorb ANY refugees. There would be two states - a Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state.”

**+ Symbolic:** “On their part, Palestinians will give up any claims to the “right of return” - which is sacred to them”
Experiment 2: Palestinian Refugees

• Surveyed rep sample of refugees in Dec ‘05, weeks before Palestinian elections

• Over 80% of those surveyed were *moral absolutists* regarding the “right of return” to be a SV
Violence: Refugees

**Taboo:** Palestinians would be required to give up the right to return to their homes in what is now Israel. There would be two states: a Jewish state in Israel and a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.”

**Symbolic:** “On their part, Israel will give up what it believes is its sacred right to the West Bank.”
“Joy” at suicide bomb: Refugees

**Taboo:** Palestinians would be required to give up the right to return to their homes in what is now Israel. There would be two states: a Jewish state in Israel and a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.”

**+ Symbolic:** “On their part, Israel will give up what it believes is its sacred right to the West Bank.”
Implications

• Experiments have demonstrated resistance and flexibility to compromise in disputes over SVs
• Unlike strong preferences, SVs are resistant to material compensation
  – More salient, worse results
• Like strong preferences, SVs show some flexibility to symbolic compensation
Next

• What happens when materially better deals are presented consecutively?
  – Material improvement transparent
• Adversarial predictions
• Moralization process