

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A bright side of sadness: The depolarizing role of sadness in intergroup conflicts

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Funding information

H2020 European Research Council, Grant/Award Number: 335607

Abstract

Intractable conflicts constitute violent and threatening environments that lead to intense emotions and polarized attitudes. Sadness is one emotion frequently elicited by the price of such conflicts. This investigation characterized the effects of sadness on conflict-related information processing and attitudes in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Findings from four experimental studies suggest that both incidental and integral sadness can induce a depolarization of political attitudes. In Study 1 ($N = 163$), sadness reduced the effect of political ideology on conflict-related decisions. Sadness reduced the effect of political ideology on in-group bias in resource allocation in Studies 2 ($N = 213$) and 4 ($N = 274$), willingness to negotiate in Studies 1 and 3 ($N = 174$), and openness to information supporting the out-group's perspective (Study 4). Overall, in addition to its more negative implications, these results suggest that sadness (compared to both the non-emotional and anger conditions) may have a bright side, since it may induce depolarization of political attitudes in intractable conflicts.

KEYWORDS

emotion, inter-group conflicts, Israeli–Palestinian conflict, negative emotions, political decision-making, sadness

1 | INTRODUCTION

Emotions shape the perceptions, motivations, decisions, actions, and social relationships of individuals and groups (Huntsinger et al., 2014; Lerner et al., 2003). In the context of prolonged conflicts, negative emotions are often seen as catalysts for conflict escalation and increased violence. For instance, fear was found to reduce openness to information while directing attention toward negative cues (Jervis, 1976) and humiliation led people to want to retaliate (Lindner, 2002).

Sadness is an unpleasant negative emotion indicative of loss (Camras & Allison, 1989), which is often experienced within intractable conflicts. The perceptions of disempowerment and hopelessness that accompany sadness (Keltner et al., 1993) can lead to apathy, passivity and inaction, thus maintaining the status quo. In addition, research has suggested that sadness may lead to reduced acceptance of offers to negotiate, since it can prompt negative judgments

of the out-group, the situation, and the perception that the proposals are unfair (Gasper & Danube, 2016).

Here, we posited that sadness induces not only negative effects, but in some contexts, may also attenuate the course of intergroup conflicts by serving as a moderating factor to reduce the effect of ideology on conflict-related decisions. During conflicts, people tend to use a simplified, one-sided representation of reality (De Dreu & Nijstad, 2008; Dechesne & Kruglanski, 2004), which may enhance ideological polarization within the societies involved in conflicts (Oran Harel, Maoz, & Halperin, 2020). In this work we refer to polarization as the tendency to be greatly affected by political ideology when making judgments and decisions (Levendusky, 2010). Depolarization is not defined here as a decrease in extreme political attitudes, but rather as a decrease in the strength of political ideology impacting attitudes and behaviors. Our goal was to examine whether, in the context of an intergroup conflict, sadness prompts individuals to explore both sides and make decisions that are governed to a lesser extent by their ideological schema.

The following section reviews the literature on the dynamics of intractable conflicts and centers on their polarizing nature and effects on people's decision-making. We then examine the role of emotions (specifically sadness) and expand on previous research dealing with the various effects of sadness. The results of the four studies, presented next, provide consistent evidence for a weaker association between ideology and conflict-related attitudes and behavior in the sadness condition (compared to both the non-emotional and anger conditions). Finally, we discuss the findings and their implications within the broader context of emotion, ideology, conflict-related decision-making research and practice.

2 | THE POLARIZING DYNAMICS OF INTRACTABLE CONFLICTS

Intractable conflicts are harsh, violent and dangerous. To cope with the challenges of conflict, groups develop a conflict-focused mindset that justifies the behavior of their group, facilitates mobilization, and helps maintain a positive social identity (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2007, 2013). As part of the conflict mindset, people tend to perceive the situation in an unambiguous simplified way as black or white (e.g., Dechesne & Kruglanski, 2004; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). This conflict mindset biases perception and facilitates schematic information processing consistent with socially accepted beliefs and the one-sided version of events maintained by each group (De Dreu & Nijstad, 2008; Kunda, 1990).

One powerful construct that individuals harness to perceive and interpret a conflict is political ideology (Federico & Hunt, 2013; Jost et al., 2009). Ideology is a mental structure most researchers consider to be a schema, that is, a learned knowledge structure consisting of an interrelated network of beliefs, opinions, and values (Jost et al., 2009). Ideology upholds descriptions of the current situation, past events, future possibilities and human nature, and orients the individual's decisions (Denzau & North, 1994; Jost et al., 2009). Ideology is a fundamental component of the life of group members and is reflected in general worldviews as well as everyday choices (Caprara et al., 2017; Monteiro et al., 2017).

Although political ideology serves as a useful schema that allows people to comprehend and make sense of the situation in intergroup conflicts, it can also lead to a widening of ideological gaps between political groups within the same society. Specifically, for societies in intractable conflicts, political ideology can develop into a fundamental component of people's identity that revolves mainly around "leftist" (dovish) or "rightist" (hawkish) conflict-related attitudes (Palmer et al., 2004). As the gaps between those ideological groups increase, members can perceive each other's position as threatening to society, which may lead to increased polarization and even endanger perceptions of a common identity (Orlan Harel et al., 2020).

3 | NEGATIVE EMOTIONS IN INTRACTABLE CONFLICTS AND THE SPECIFIC ROLE OF SADNESS

Over the last three decades, a growing body of literature has highlighted the central role of emotions in the dynamics of intergroup conflicts and their resolution (e.g., Halperin, 2016; Lindner, 2006; Maoz & McCauley, 2009). In most previous studies, negative emotions have been perceived as promoting intergroup violence and as detrimental to conflict resolution (e.g., Long & Brecke, 2003; Petersen, 2002). Hatred, for example, is associated with perceiving the out-group as having extremely negative characteristics, and leads to extreme violence (Opatow & McClelland, 2007). Fear was found to promote aggressive behavior (Eibl-Eibesfeldt & Sütterlin, 1990) and a bias toward rejecting conciliatory opportunities (Cohen-Chen et al., 2014).

Despite the perception of negative emotions as "bad drivers," some negative emotions may affect conflicts positively, under specific conditions. Anger, for instance, was shown to increase support for violent actions toward the out-group (Veenstra et al., 2017). However, in the context of efforts to de-escalate a conflict (Reifen Tagar et al., 2011) or in the absence of hate (Halperin et al., 2011), anger increased support for constructive attitudes and concession-making.

Sadness is also a negative emotion, which is characterized by unpleasant low arousal, and encapsulates a feeling of meaningful loss and the inability to rectify a situation (Keltner et al., 1993; Lench et al., 2011). It is evoked within the context of intractable conflicts by formal displays (e.g., memorial days) or personal experiences (e.g., loss of loved ones). The cognitive appraisal attributed to sadness is extreme lack of control (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Sadness signals a need for help, and may prompt the sad person to seek outside assistance (Frijda, 1994) and others to provide it (Clark & Taraban, 1991). Compared with happy individuals, sad people generate more effective interpersonal persuasive messages but are less confident in their negotiating strategies and tend to attribute conflicts to internal, stable, and global causes (Forgas, 2002, 2007).

Two theoretical frameworks led us to the notion that sadness may reduce people's reliance on political ideologically based schemata when making conflict-related decisions. According to the Self-Validation hypothesis, sad people are less confident about the information at their disposal, regardless of its source (Briñol et al., 2007). This decrease in confidence may lead people to reduce the extent to which they are willing to continue relying on this information.

According to the Affect as Cognitive Feedback account (Clore & Huntsinger, 2007, 2009), individuals' emotions provide conscious information about their unconscious evaluation of situations. That is, emotions play a role in judgment and thought processes by providing adaptive information to the person about his or her unconscious perception of a situation (Ray & Huntsinger, 2017).

Negative emotions, and specifically sadness, are a cue that indicates a need to change one's currently held cognitive processing style (Huntsinger et al., 2010; Huntsinger et al., 2009). Hence, the Affect as Cognitive Feedback account would predict that in intergroup conflicts, where people tend to rely on schematic descriptions of the situation (De Dreu & Nijstad, 2008), sad individuals would abandon a simplified schematic processing style (which includes the ideological schema) in favor of detail-oriented processing, thus reducing the effect of the ideology schema on their decisions (Huntsinger et al., 2010).

4 | THE PRESENT RESEARCH

Two theoretical frameworks suggest that sadness may reduce the tendency of people experiencing intergroup conflicts to rely excessively on ideologically based schema. This effect may be driven by general reduced reliance on one-sided schemata (affect as cognitive feedback account), or by reduced reliance on pre-existing information including ideologically based schema (self-validation hypothesis). This led to our main working hypothesis that since sadness in the context of intergroup conflicts is likely to reduce reliance on schemata (ideology), it should reduce the effect of political ideology on participants' decisions and behavior. Thus, the differences between Leftists and Rightists in decision-making patterns should diminish when they are sad.

This study investigated the effect of sadness as an integral (context-dependent) and an incidental (unrelated to the context) emotion in an exceptional and explosive situation. This was done to provide a better understanding of the emotion itself and its effects. The current study makes two key contributions to the literature. First, by manipulating both incidental and integral emotions, we demonstrate that they both have the same effect in this context. This is important since there is little data on the effects of manipulated integral emotions and how they compare to incidental emotions (Isbell et al., 2016). Second, it is one of the few studies to focus on sadness in experiments that deal with a real-world intractable conflict situation, and differ considerably from the lab scenarios often used in investigations of sadness. Some of the notable exceptions that have referred to a real-world intractable conflict situation include a study that revealed that sadness, as compared to anger, was related to fewer causal attributions for the September 11 terrorist attack (Small et al., 2006). In the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Bensimon (2009) found that expressions of sadness by Jewish settlers evoked empathy in the Israeli security forces tasked with evicting them. Porat et al. (2016) reported that people with a stronger need to belong preferred to experience group-based sadness on Israel's National Memorial Day.

Our research hypotheses were tested in four experimental studies on Jewish Israelis in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, a prototypical example of an intractable conflict. Studies often compare the effects of sadness to happiness (e.g., Forgas, 2007; Stalder & Cook, 2014), or to anger (e.g., Bodenhausen et al., 1994),

leaving the question of the source of the effect (sadness or the other emotion) unanswered. To address this gap, we compared the effects of sadness to a non-emotional condition as well as to an anger condition. Despite having different action tendencies from sadness, anger has the same valence as sadness and is commonly used in research as a comparison with sadness (see Bodenhausen et al., 1994; Huber et al., 2015; Sadler et al., 2005; Small et al., 2006). Moreover, in the specific context of intractable conflict, the same events might lead to the experience of either anger or sadness (depending on their interpretation).

The aim of these studies was to document the diminished influence of political ideology (i.e., depolarization) on conflict-related attitudes and behaviors under conditions of sadness. The attitudes assessed were chosen since they are relevant to both escalation and de-escalation of intergroup conflicts as well as to the socio-political public discourse in Israel. Specifically, support for aggressive policies (Study 1) was chosen since aggressive policies (i.e., military responses likely to cause collateral casualties) may lead to conflict escalation. Support for prisoner exchange was chosen since it is a widely discussed, polarizing issue in Israeli society (Studies 1 and 3). Further, the studies were designed to go beyond attitudinal measures to examine actual behaviors that are crucial for conflict resolution, such as the division of joint resources (Studies 2 and 4) and behavioral openness to the out-group's perspective (Study 4).

5 | STUDY 1: THE EFFECT OF INCIDENTAL SADNESS ON THE USE OF IDEOLOGICAL SCHEMATA

The goal of the first study was to examine whether sadness lessens the use of ideological schemata as a guiding construct when making decisions, and thus leads to less polarized decision-making. In real-world intergroup conflicts, most people have rigid views that are used to organize new information and are highly resistant to change (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). In the case of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, for instance, Leftists tend to oppose aggressive policies (that are likely to lead to collateral casualties) more than Rightists, and exhibit more support for negotiation and conciliatory actions than Rightists (Bar-Tal et al., 2012; Schori-Eyal et al., 2019).

The study used a “burning issue” (hostages that were held by Hamas at the time) whose resolution could lead to both the initiation of aggressive policies (i.e., military response to Palestinian protests and attacks) or negotiation and conciliatory actions (i.e., releasing out-group members who were held as prisoners). The use of this issue allowed us to investigate two key aspects on which Leftists and Rightists tend to diverge that are relevant to both escalation and de-escalation of intergroup conflicts. Our main hypothesis was that sadness would moderate (reduce) the association between political ideology and conflict-related decisions. Specifically, we expected to observe a difference between Rightists and Leftists, such that Rightists were expected to report more support for aggressive

policies and less support for conciliatory actions in the non-emotional control condition. However, we predicted that this difference would diminish in the sadness condition.

5.1 | Method

5.1.1 | Participants

The sample was composed of 163 Jewish-Israeli adults (63.2% women; $M_{\text{age}} = 30$, $SD = 11.99$) contacted through paid recruiters from "Hakolal Research," an affiliate system for the dissemination of digital experiments and surveys.¹ Since our main hypothesis was an interaction, and interactions tend to have a small effect size (Wahlsten, 1991), we predicted a relatively small effect size (0.05). Based on an a-priori sample size calculator for hierarchical multiple regressions (power level: 0.8; set A predictors: 2; set B predictors: 1), a minimum target sample size of 158 participants was determined (Soper, 2017). Thus, "Hakolal Research" was requested to supply a sample of 160 participants (4 participants were added to make sure they met their quota). One participant was omitted from analysis for failing to follow manipulation instructions. In terms of political ideology, 44.8% defined themselves as Rightists, 22.1% as Centrists, and 33.1% as Leftists.²

5.1.2 | Procedure

Participants were told that the study examined emotional memory and that they would be asked to describe a memory, answer political questions and recall the memory again. Participants were then randomly assigned to two groups and were asked to describe in writing a sadness-inducing event (in one group) or a non-emotional personal event from their past (in the other). The participants were asked to think about the event and describe the event itself as well as the time, location, and their feelings and thoughts during the event (for a similar manipulation see Lerner & Keltner, 2001 study 4; Tangney et al., 1996). After describing the event, participants were asked to read a short description of a bogus proposal for a prisoner exchange between Israel and Hamas³ (an issue discussed at the time) and rate their agreement with conciliatory actions (support for the proposed prisoners exchange) or aggressive policies (e.g., extreme responses to hurting civilians). The participants then responded to some additional statements on exploratory measures (all reported in the Supplementary Materials). Finally, they reported their socio-demographic information.

5.1.3 | Measures

Manipulation check

Three external evaluators blind to the study conditions and hypotheses rated the responses to the open-ended manipulation questions. The evaluators rated the level of sadness expressed in each statement, both in the sadness and in the non-emotional condition (*In your opinion, how sad was the writer?*). To make sure that the sadness manipulation induced sadness and not just any negative emotion, the evaluators also rated each statement for expressions of anger on a 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*very much*) scale. Inter-rater reliability was calculated separately for each rated emotion as an estimate of the accuracy of the rating process. For the sadness rating, the correlation coefficient (ICC) was $r_{\text{ICC}} = .95$ ($p < .001$), for the anger rating the ICC was $r_{\text{ICC}} = 0.84$ ($p < .001$).

Support for prisoner exchange

There is a heated ongoing debate over prisoner exchanges in Israel. For many years, Israel's official position was that no terrorists or prisoners would be released in exchange for the freeing of kidnapped soldiers or citizens. Nevertheless, many prisoners (including prisoners who killed Israelis) have been set free in such exchanges. To tap this debate, two items were used to assess participants' support for prisoner exchanges (*If the proposal were to be submitted to a referendum, to what extent would you support it? To what extent, in your opinion, is this proposal beneficial to Israel?*). Participants rated the extent to which they found a prisoner exchange proposal acceptable on a scale of 1 (*bad proposal/would not support it*) to 5 (*very good proposal/would greatly support it*) ($\alpha = .81$).

Support for aggressive policies

Two items were used to assess participants' support for aggressive policies toward the out-group that are likely to lead to collateral casualties (*Israel should act aggressively and make the Palestinians pay heavily every time they hurt an Israeli civilian; In the case of thousands of Palestinians marching toward Jerusalem, the IDF must use weapons (for example, firearms with live bullets) to stop them, even at the cost of dozens of lives and hundreds wounded*). Participants rated the extent to which they agreed with the items on a scale of 1 (*greatly object*) to 5 (*greatly support*) ($\alpha = 0.64$).

Demographics

Participants provided socio-demographic information including political ideology (1 = *extreme right*; 7 = *extreme left*), age and gender.

5.2 | Results and discussion

5.2.1 | Manipulation check

An ANOVA with the condition as the between-participants variable and the two emotion ratings as the within-participant variable showed the expected main effect of emotional intensity, $F(1,$

¹"Hakolal Research" hires recruiters and pays them for each participant. Recruiters contact participants from their immediate environment and since they come from diverse backgrounds, a diverse participant pool is assumed to be selected. The participants do not get financial incentives for their participation.

²In all four studies, no difference was found between the political ideology distribution for each condition.

³The source of the bogus proposal (Israel's government vs. Hamas) varied across participants. When used as a covariate the pattern of results remained as reported.

161) = 511.69, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.76$. Judges rated the sadness condition ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.75$) as having higher emotional intensity than the non-emotional condition ($M = 1.26$, $SD = 0.45$). A similar ANOVA on the nature of the rated emotion (anger vs. sadness) showed the expected main effect of emotion, $F(1, 161) = 92.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.37$. Judges evaluated the participants' responses as revealing more sadness ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.86$) than anger ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 1.03$). In line with predictions, this main effect was qualified by a significant interaction, $F(1, 161) = 143.07$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.47$. In the sadness condition, judges rated higher levels of sadness ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.113$) compared to anger ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.07$), while in the non-emotional condition judges rated lower levels of sadness ($M = 1.15$, $SD = 0.37$) compared to anger ($M = 1.37$, $SD = 0.68$).

5.2.2 | Support for prisoners' exchange

We first tested whether the effect of political ideology on support for a prisoners' exchange in the non-emotional condition would be reduced in the sadness condition. We employed Hayes' (2018) (version 3.3) PROCESS bootstrapping command (model 1:5,000 iterations). The analysis revealed a significant main effect of political ideology on the magnitude of support for a prisoners' exchange ($b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 3.75$, $p < .001$, $CI = [0.09, 0.29]$), but no main effect for the emotion condition ($b = -0.04$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = -0.28$, $p = .78$, $CI = [-0.33, 0.25]$). The analysis further revealed a significant Emotion condition \times Political ideology interaction ($b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = -2.19$, $p = .030$, $CI = [-0.42, -0.02]$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.03$). As shown in Figure 1, Rightists and Leftists in the non-emotional condition differed in their support for a prisoners' exchange ($b = 0.30$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 4.34$, $p < .001$, $CI = [0.16, 0.43]$). However, there was no difference between Rightists' and Leftists' support for a prisoners' exchange in the sadness condition ($b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 1.03$, $p = .30$, $CI = [-0.06, 0.22]$). The interaction pattern was such that in the non-emotional condition, Leftists supported a prisoners' exchange significantly more than Rightists did, whereas in the sadness

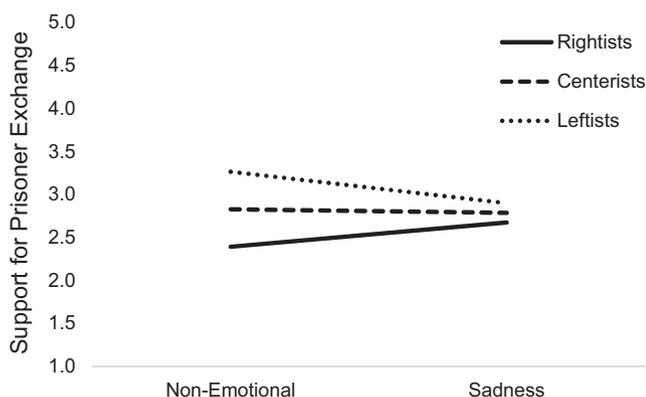


FIGURE 1 Support for prisoner exchange as a function of political ideology in each experimental condition (Study 1)

condition, ideology was not associated with support for a prisoners' exchange.

5.2.3 | Support for aggressive policies

The same analysis was conducted with the dependent variable of support for aggressive policies toward the out-group. We employed Hayes' (2018) (version 3.3) PROCESS bootstrapping command (model 1:5,000 iterations). The analysis revealed a significant main effect of political ideology on support for aggressive policies ($b = -0.41$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = -8.90$, $p < .001$, $CI = [-0.50, -0.32]$), but no main effect was found for emotion ($b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.13$, $t = 0.81$, $p = .420$, $CI = [-0.16, 0.38]$). There was also a marginally significant Emotion condition \times Political ideology interaction ($b = 0.18$, $SE = 0.09$, $t = 1.95$, $p = .053$, $CI = [0.00, 0.36]$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.015$). Rightist and Leftist participants in the non-emotional condition differed in their support for aggressive policies ($b = -0.50$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = -7.94$, $p < .001$, $CI = [-0.62, -0.38]$). There was also a smaller albeit significant difference between Rightists' and Leftists' support for aggressive policies in the sadness condition ($b = -0.32$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = -4.67$, $p < .001$, $CI = [-0.45, -0.18]$). The interaction pattern was such that in the non-emotional condition, Rightists supported aggressive policies more than Leftists, whereas in the sadness condition ideology was less strongly associated with support for aggressive policies (see Figure 2).

The results of Study 1 provided initial indications that sadness may have a depolarizing effect on reported support for conflict-related policies. In the sadness condition, participants' responses were less affected by political ideology on both dependent measures (support for a prisoners' exchange and support for aggressive policies). These results appear to lend weight to the initial hypothesis that sadness attenuates the effect of political ideology. Alternatively, sadness may not have worked alone to create the effect; rather the increase in negative emotions in general may have contributed to the effect. To test this alternative explanation, in the second study we added a direct manipulation of anger as an additional negative emotion control condition.

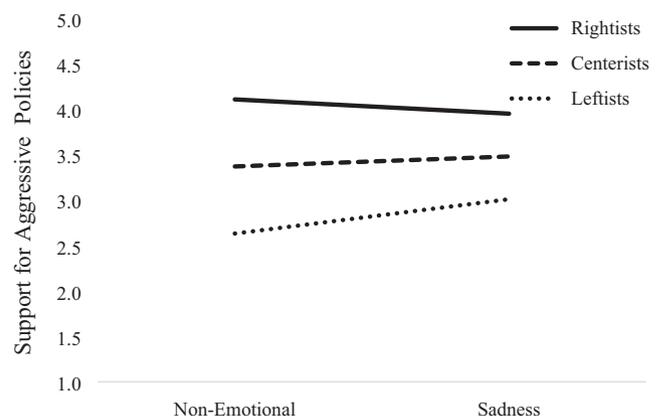


FIGURE 2 Support for aggressive policies as a function of political ideology in each experimental condition (Study 1)

6 | STUDY 2: THE EFFECT OF INCIDENTAL SADNESS ON IDEOLOGY RELATED IN-GROUP PREFERENCE

Study 2 was designed to expand on Study 1 in two ways. Study 1 compared sadness to a non-emotional condition; hence we could not rule out the possibility that a similar effect (i.e., reduction of reliance on an ideological scheme) might be observed in all the negative emotions. Accordingly, in Study 2 we compared sadness to another negative emotion: anger. Additionally, to increase the validity of the effect, instead of testing participants' self-reported support for various policies, we tested a behavioral measure by examining how sadness affects intergroup resource allocation. Resource allocation is often used as an assessment of in-group favoritism, both in the laboratory using the minimal group paradigm and in real-world settings (Diekmann et al., 1997; Hertel & Kerr, 2001). We hypothesized that sadness would attenuate the effect of political ideology on conflict-related decisions. That is, we expected a strong effect of political ideology on in-group favoritism, so that Rightists would allocate fewer funds to the out-group than Leftists in both the non-emotional and anger conditions. However, a lesser disparity in monetary allocation was predicted between Rightists and Leftists in the sadness condition.

6.1 | Method

6.1.1 | Participants

Participants were 213 Jewish-Israelis (61.1% Women⁴; $M_{\text{age}} = 29.52$, $SD = 13.05$). Of these participants, 111 were students who participated in the survey online for class credit and 102 were approached in public places (around the campus, in a coffee shop) and asked to participate in a brief survey (27 additional participants were incompatible with the study criteria and were dropped from the analysis).⁵ A sample size of 304 participants was determined via G*Power version 3.1.9.4 (Faul et al., 2009; Faul et al., 2007). A pre-determined effect size used was $f = 0.2$, which was similar to the effect size found in Study 1, and power was set to 0.8 ($df = 4$). However, our data collection was limited as it had to be stopped a week before the Israeli national elections.⁶ In terms of political ideology, 40.4% of the respondents defined themselves as Rightists, 27.7% as Centrists, and 31.9% as Leftists.

⁴38% of the remaining participants were men, 0.9% unreported.

⁵Twenty-seven additional participants who completed the survey were excluded from the analysis. Of those participants, 19 were non-Jewish and 8 described a sad event directly related to the conflict in the manipulation (e.g. "A qassam (ground to ground missile) hit while we were all asleep." These participants were eliminated.

⁶Prior to the election there was a great deal of campaigning related to the issues we used as DVs; therefore, we feared that the campaigning would interfere, in the sense of creating "noise," and would mask the effect.

6.1.2 | Procedure

The participants were told that the study was designed to examine the relationship between their description of personal events and the way they made decisions. We used the same emotion manipulation as in Study 1 and added anger as a second control condition. After the manipulation, participants were given a brief description of UNICEF and were told that the organization was planning to raise 100 million shekels for children in the area. Participants were then asked to divide the money between initiatives for Israeli and Palestinian children. Afterwards participants provided socio-demographic information.⁷

6.1.3 | Measures

Manipulation check

The manipulation check was similar to the one in Study 1. For the sadness ratings, the correlation coefficient (ICC) was $r_{\text{ICC}} = 0.88$ ($p < .001$), and for the anger ratings $r_{\text{ICC}} = 0.91$ ($p < .001$).

Out-group monetary allocation

To behaviorally test in-group favoritism, participants were asked to divide the UNICEF funds between Israeli and Palestinian children. The percentage of money allocated to Palestinian children (the out-group) from the total allocated funds was used to evaluate out-group monetary allocation.

Demographics

Participants provided socio-demographic information including their political ideology. Political ideology was coded as a three-level variable. A right, center and left classification is commonly used in research since the differences between Leftists and Rightists are profound. The right versus left split is indicative of different (at times opposite) views, emotional processes and responses (Jost et al., 2009; Pliskin et al., 2018).

6.2 | Results and discussion

6.2.1 | Manipulation check

An ANOVA with the emotion condition as a factor and sadness ratings as the dependent variable showed the expected main effect for the emotion condition, $F(2, 210) = 81.96$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.44$). A Bonferroni post hoc test revealed that sadness ratings were higher in the sadness condition ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.67$) compared to sadness

⁷Participants were also asked to rate how fair and moral their allocation of funds was. The result of the fairness items can be found in the Supplementary Materials. The data were initially collected using paper and pencil questionnaires, but to increase the number of participants they were added to an electronic questionnaire used for another experiment. Since the two questionnaires were visually different, we tested and found no effect of source of the questionnaire or interaction with condition, ideology or an interaction between them.

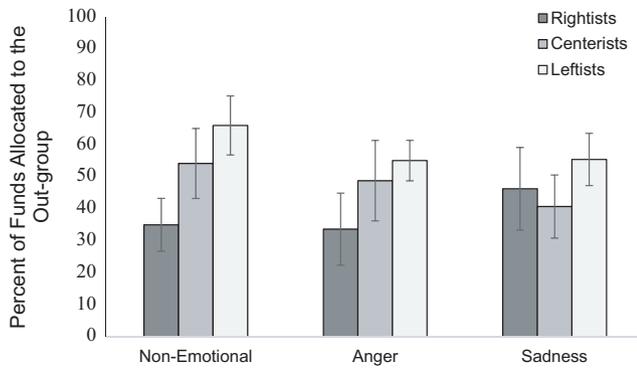


FIGURE 3 Percent of funds allocated to the out-group as a function of political ideology in each experimental condition (Study 2)

ratings in the anger ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 1.21$) and the non-emotional ($M = 1.31$, $SD = 0.58$) conditions, all p 's < 0.001 . A similar ANOVA on anger ratings as the dependent variable showed the expected main effect for the emotion condition for anger ratings as well, $F(2, 210) = 113.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.52$. A Bonferroni post hoc test revealed that in the anger condition ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.14$) anger ratings were higher than in the sadness ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.16$) and non-emotional ($M = 1.22$, $SD = 0.66$) conditions, all p 's < 0.001 . The result of the manipulation checks indicated that both anger and sadness were less pronounced in the non-emotional condition compared to both emotional conditions.

6.2.2 | Out-group monetary allocation

To test whether political ideology had a lesser effect on monetary allocation in the sadness condition, we used a univariate ANOVA test. There was no significant effect for emotional condition ($F(2, 196) = 1.47$, $p = .23$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$), but there was a significant effect for political ideology ($F(2, 196) = 17.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.15$) and a significant interaction for Political Ideology \times Emotional condition ($F(4, 196) = 2.55$, $p = .040$, $\eta^2 = 0.05$). The effects were such that in the non-emotional condition, Rightists were less willing to allocate money to the out-group ($M = 34.89$, $SD = 25.81$) compared to Centerists ($M = 54.08$, $SD = 19.75$) or Leftists ($M = 65.95$, $SD = 16.32$). Similarly, in the anger condition, Rightists were less willing to allocate money to the out-group ($M = 33.55$, $SD = 22.51$) compared to Centerists ($M = 48.70$, $SD = 25.15$) and Leftists ($M = 55.34$, $SD = 18.47$). However, in the sadness condition, the differences between the allocation patterns of Rightists ($M = 46.16$, $SD = 16.52$), Centerists ($M = 40.60$, $SD = 21.91$) and Leftists ($M = 55.34$, $SD = 18.47$) were smaller.⁸ Interestingly, the Rightists allocated more funds to the out-group compared to the Centerists (Figure 3).

The results of Study 2 indicated that incidental sadness can attenuate the effect of political ideology on a behavioral measure of

in-group preference (monetary allocation to the out-group). That is, whereas in the non-emotional and anger conditions, political ideology corresponded to monetary allocation (Rightists allocated less of the money to the out-group compared to Leftists), this effect was smaller in the sadness condition. This pattern of results suggests that the depolarizing effect may be specific to sadness and not stem from the general negative valence of the emotion. So far, we only used incidental emotion manipulations. Study 3 was designed to increase the generalizability of the conclusions to integral sadness generated in a real intractable conflict situation.

7 | STUDY 3: A REAL-WORLD EXAMINATION OF THE EFFECT OF SADNESS ON DECISION-MAKING DURING CONFLICT ESCALATION

The third study aimed to extend the ecological validity of the previous studies by replicating the findings in response to a real-world situation involving decisions during an escalation of the conflict. This study induced specific emotions by utilizing a real-time conflict-related event (the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli adolescents by Hamas in June 2014) as the background story. Emotions were manipulated using a bogus speech about the event and the measure was related to the possible reoccurrence of civilian kidnappings. Importantly, whereas in Studies 1 and 2, sadness was manipulated as an incidental personal emotion unrelated to the issue at hand, in the current study we tested the effect of integral (context-dependent) sadness.

The importance of the real-world conflict situation used as an emotion induction in this study is threefold. First, by using a real-world conflict escalation we verified that the effect could withstand the extremeness of a real conflict situation (that often entails escalation periods). Second, by utilizing an event that was directly associated with the conflict as the basis for the emotion manipulation we hoped to strengthen our claim that sadness elicited by the conflict would in turn affect people's management of that conflict. Finally, since there is very little data on the effects of manipulated integral emotions and how they compare to incidental emotions, the findings potentially have theoretical as well as methodological significance (Isbell et al., 2016).

We conducted the study during an escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On June 12, 2014, three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped from a bus stop in the West Bank. The Israel Defense Forces initiated an Operation called "Brother's Keeper" to search for them. The bodies of the teenagers were found 18 days later by a search team near the city of Hebron. Participants' responses were collected starting three days after the discovery of the bodies of the Israeli teenagers (data collection lasted three days). Therefore, in the time period in which the study was conducted, the conflict was ever-present in Israelis' minds. Here again, our hypothesis was that the sadness manipulation would moderate the participants' reliance on political ideology when making

⁸For additional statistics for this and the following studies see Supplementary Materials.

conflict-related decisions. That is, we predicted a strong effect of political ideology, such that Leftists would be more willing to negotiate than Rightists in the event of future kidnappings in the non-emotional and anger conditions, and that this effect would diminish in the sadness condition.

7.1 | Method

7.1.1 | Participants

A sample of 174 Jewish-Israelis (53.4% women; $M_{\text{age}} = 42.14$, $SD = 15.33$) were contacted via an online survey company (Midgam) and asked to participate in exchange for monetary compensation. A sample size of 196 participants was determined via G*Power version 3.1.9.4 (Faul et al., 2007; Faul et al., 2009). The pre-determined effect size used was $f = 0.25$ which was similar to the effect size found in Study 2, and power was set to 0.8 ($df = 4$). Due to the quickly evolving series of events, data collection lasted three days and we managed to collect responses from 186 participants (twelve of whom were excluded from the analysis).⁹ In terms of political ideology, 57.5% of the respondents defined themselves as Rightists, 25.9% as Centrists, and 14.4% as Leftists (2.3% did not indicate their political ideology). Due to the small number of Leftists in the sample we combined the Leftists and the Centrists to create a Center-Leftist group which we compared to the Rightist group.

7.1.2 | Procedure

Participants were told that the survey examined attitudes toward social and political issues. They were randomly assigned to the sadness, non-emotional or anger condition. In each condition participants read a passage about the kidnapping. In the non-emotional condition, the passage read: *The Israeli government is now discussing its action policy regarding civilians and soldiers who are kidnapped by hostile parties. As stated above, this survey will examine the Israeli public's stances on this issue, and you will also be asked to make decisions about the steps that should be taken in such a situation.* In addition to this text, the two emotional conditions also included a bogus anger/sadness-inducing passage from Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech on the kidnapping (the complete passages is in the Supplementary Materials). The sadness-inducing passage related to the families' loss and mourning (a description consistent with the sadness appraisal), whereas the anger condition passage stated that Israel would not

forgive the murderers and that Hamas would pay for their deaths (a description consistent with the anger appraisal). To make sure the participants immersed themselves in the emotion, after reading the text they were asked to describe in writing what most saddened (in the sadness condition) or angered (in the anger condition) them about the event. Then, participants responded to statements regarding the proper response by Israel in case of future kidnappings and murders. This was part of a larger study that included other issues such as risk perception and economic decisions (available in the Supplementary Materials). Finally, participants reported their socio-demographic information.

7.1.3 | Measures

Manipulation check

The manipulation check was as in Study 1. For the sadness rating, the correlation coefficient (ICC) was $r_{\text{ICC}} = .84$ ($p < .001$), for the anger rating an ICC of $r_{\text{ICC}} = .67$ ($p < .001$) was found.

Willingness to negotiate in the case of future kidnapping

To test for differences in participants' attitudes toward negotiation in extreme conflict situations, participants rated their agreement with three sentences on negotiation in the event of future kidnappings (e.g., *In future kidnapping events we must negotiate with terror organizations to retrieve the hostages unharmed; In no case should Palestinian prisoners be released in exchange for the release of hostages (reverse item); In the future, when there is a kidnapping of civilians, Palestinian prisoners should be released, including murderers in exchange for the return of the kidnapped soldiers to their homes*). This topic reflects ideology, since Left-wingers typically prefer to negotiate and Right-wingers prefer more aggressive approaches. The items were rated on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*to a large extent*) ($\alpha = .77$).

Demographics

Participants provided socio-demographic information as they did in the previous studies.

7.2 | Results and discussion

7.2.1 | Manipulation check

An ANOVA with emotion condition as the factor and sadness ratings as the dependent variable showed the expected main effect for the emotion condition, $F(1, 105) = 99.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.93$. Sadness ratings were higher in the sadness condition ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.01$) compared to the anger condition ($M = 1.78$, $SD = 0.56$). A similar ANOVA with emotion condition as the factor and anger ratings as the dependent variable showed the expected main effect for the emotion condition, $F(1, 105) = 43.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.29$. Anger ratings in the anger condition ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.79$) were higher than in the sadness condition ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.85$).

⁹Of these 12 participants, one participant did not pass the reading proficiency examination. Three were excluded for providing non-informative responses (gibberish, irrelevant statements). Six wrote about other emotions (hatred of Palestinians in general, anger at the State of Israel's public transportation system in the sadness condition, etc.). Two were excluded for not providing an emotion or emotional description but rather suggesting means of preventing similar events from occurring in the future (by not allowing adolescents to hitchhike or by being harsher toward nationalistic murderers).

7.2.2 | Willingness to negotiate in the case of future kidnapping

As predicted, the two groups (Rightists and Center-Leftists) differed in their willingness to negotiate ($t(127.20) = 4.26, p < .001$). We tested whether sadness moderated the effect of political ideology on attitudes regarding negotiation in the event of kidnapping, using an ANOVA. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of political ideology on the magnitude of support for negotiation in future kidnappings ($F(1, 164) = 19.09, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.10$), but no main effect for the emotion condition ($F(2, 164) = 1.55, p = .216, \eta^2 = 0.02$). The analysis further revealed an Emotion condition \times Political ideology interaction ($F(2, 164) = 3.27, p = .041, \eta^2 = 0.04$). As can be seen in Figure 4, in the non-emotional condition, Rightists' support for negotiation in the case of future kidnapping was lower ($M = 2.33, SD = 0.99$) compared to Center-Leftists ($M = 3.63, SD = 1.29$). In the anger condition, the same pattern of Rightists reporting less support for negotiation in the case of future kidnappings ($M = 2.12, SD = 0.99$) compared to Center-Leftists ($M = 3.11, SD = 1.40$) emerged. However, in the sadness condition, this difference between Rightists' ($M = 2.59, SD = 1.21$) and Center-Leftists' ($M = 2.75, SD = 1.24$) support for negotiation in the case of future kidnappings diminished. The results indicated that in the non-emotional and anger conditions, Center-Leftists supported negotiation in cases of future kidnappings to a greater extent than Rightists, whereas in the sadness condition, ideology was less indicative of support for negotiation.

The results of Study 3 further supported our hypothesis that sadness would attenuate the effect of the political ideologically based schema on support for negotiation in the case of kidnappings. In the non-emotional and anger conditions, political ideology was associated with support for negotiation, whereas in the sadness condition, political ideology was not. Note that the participants in the sadness and anger conditions were asked to write about their feelings concerning the situation, but participants in the non-emotional condition were not asked to write, to prevent them from experiencing negative emotions. However, since we compared the sadness condition to the two controls and the potential confound was found

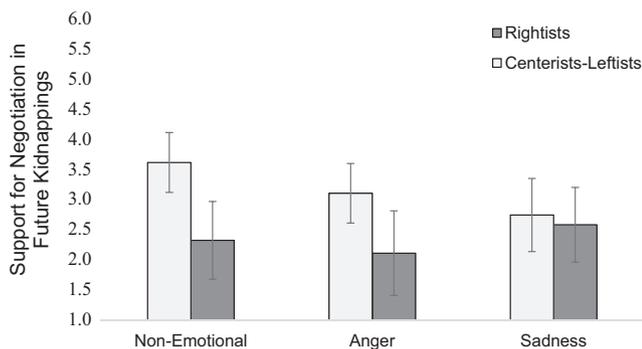


FIGURE 4 Support for negotiation in future kidnapping events as a function of political ideology in each experimental condition (Study 3)

only in the non-emotional control and not in the anger control, it cannot serve as an alternative account for the results.

This study thus expanded on Studies 1 and 2 by replicating the results of the previous studies but with integral (context-related) sadness in addition to incidental sadness, as was the case in the previous two studies. Although the results of Study 3 were consistent with the results of the first two studies, a key behavioral measure that is both important in the context of the conflict and related to the theoretical frameworks presented in the introduction was not examined. Study 4 was designed to replicate Study 2 and mirror the same results pattern as in Studies 1–3 using an additional behavioral measure of openness to the out-group's perspective.

8 | STUDY 4: THE EFFECT OF SADNESS ON OPENNESS TO THE OPPONENT'S PERSPECTIVE IN TIMES OF TURBULENT CONFLICT

Study 4 was designed to replicate the pattern of results found in Study 2 during a turbulent time in the conflict, thus lending greater credence to our findings. It also examined another behavioral measure of openness to information supporting the out-group's narrative. By replicating the pattern of results found in the previous studies using another measure Study 4 was intended to increase the ability to generalize the findings. It addressed the moderating effect of sadness using the behavioral measure employed in Study 2 and an additional behavioral measure, namely, the choice of reading a text as an indication of openness and willingness to be exposed to new information. The manipulation was the same as in the first two studies and both an anger and a non-emotional condition were compared to the sadness condition.

This study was conducted from August 5 to August 12, 2018 during a turbulent time in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. On March 30, 2018, a series of mass demonstrations and riots dubbed the “Great March of Return” began in the Gaza Strip near the Israeli border. Some protesters burned tires near the border fence, threw stones and Molotov cocktails on Israeli troops, and used firebomb kites and incendiary balloons to start fires within the borders of Israel. The Israeli Defense Forces fought back with tear gas as well as live ammunition which ended with over 19,000 wounded and 179 Palestinians killed.¹⁰ When the study was conducted, Israelis were hyper-focused on the conflict.

Groups involved in long-term conflicts tend to have an in-group-centric perspective of the conflict which includes tendencies both to adhere to the in-group's narrative and to reject the out-group's perspective of the conflict (Noor et al., 2008). These tendencies are characterized by closedmindedness that involves judging information that fits the in-group's narrative as valid while

¹⁰According to UN assessments: The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs website: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/agencies-urgently-require-21-million-respond-casualties-gaza-strip>

ignoring information that might support the out-group's perspective of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007). This rigid in-group-centric perspective is a major obstacle to conflict resolution (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2009).

Resource allocation was used similarly to Study 2 as a behavioral assessment of in-group favoritism. However, the moderation pattern found in Study 2 was observed in a relatively dormant period in the conflict and Study 4 was conducted during a period of conflict escalation. Our first hypothesis was that the results pattern shown in Study 2 would be replicated, that is, that there would be a strong effect of political ideology on in-group favoritism in the non-emotional and anger conditions, but a lesser difference between Rightists and Leftists in the sadness condition.

The second hypothesis was that sadness would moderate the effect of political ideology on openness to information supporting the out-group's perspective. That is, we expected a strong effect of political ideology on the participants' willingness to read information supporting the out-group's perspective (i.e., Leftists showing greater willingness than Rightists to read this information) in the non-emotional and anger conditions, but also that this effect would be diminished in the sadness condition.

8.1 | Method

8.1.1 | Participants

The sample was composed of 276 Jewish-Israelis (51.4% women¹¹; $M_{\text{age}} = 41.10$, $SD = 15.06$) contacted via a survey company ("Panel4All") who were asked to participate in an online study in exchange for monetary compensation (four additional participants were excluded from the analysis since they did not comply with the manipulation instructions). A sample size of 276 participants was determined via G*Power version 3.1.9.4 (Faul et al., 2007; Faul et al., 2009). The pre-determined effect size used was $f = 0.21$, which was similar to the effect size found in Study 3, and power was set to 0.8 ($df = 4$). In terms of political ideology, 56.5% of the respondents defined themselves as Rightists, 22.8% as Centrists, and 20.7% as Leftists. Due to the smaller number of Leftists in the sample, we combined the Centrists and the Leftists to create a Center-Leftist group which we compared to the Rightist group.

8.1.2 | Procedure

Participants were told that they would take part in two separate studies conducted together for reasons of convenience. They were told that one study had to do with descriptions of personal emotional events and the other study was designed to explore the current political situation in Israel. The participants were then

randomly assigned to one of three conditions (non-emotional, anger and sadness) and were given instructions identical to the ones used in Studies 1 and 2. After describing the event, participants were asked to rate their emotions while responding to the manipulation questions. They were then told they had finished the first study and could proceed to the second one. Next, participants were presented with short descriptions of the hostilities between Israel and the Gaza Strip that were taking place at the time and responded to the study's focal variables and some filler items (available in the Supplementary Materials). The participants were also asked to divide funds between Israelis and Palestinian children (using the same method as in Study 2). Thereafter, they were told they should read one or more opinion articles written by experts on the summer's events to become better acquainted with them before they continued to the final part of the survey. Participants were required to choose which articles they wished to read from a short list of five articles presented to them. Two measures were constructed: one was used to assess their openness to information regarding the conflict in general, and the other to assess their openness to information specifically about the Palestinian perspective on the conflict. Finally, participants reported their socio-demographic information and they were debriefed about the purpose of the study.

8.1.3 | Measures

Manipulation check

Participants were asked to assess their own emotional state during the manipulation as they recalled it, and to rate how sad, grieved, angry, furious, hopeful and happy (the last two being filler emotions) they were on a 6-point Likert scale. The items sad and grieved were used together as a scale of self-rated sadness ($r = .87$, $p < .001$). The items angry and furious were used together as a scale of self-rated anger ($r = .94$, $p < .001$).

Out-group monetary allocation

This was measured as described in the second study.

Openness to articles supporting the out-group's perspective

Participants were asked to select which of the five news website articles they wish to read before continuing to the end of the study (for a similar procedure: Cohen-Chen et al., 2014; Wohl et al., 2016). They could choose to read 0–5 articles. They then viewed the bogus articles they requested in a format that resembled the Israeli website "YNET," a leading online news website affiliated with Jewish Israeli mainstream society. Participants were presented with two target articles expressing support for the out-group's perspective and three other articles expressing standard Israeli perspectives on the conflict. Openness to articles supporting the out-group's perspective was measured as the number of articles containing support for the out-group's perspective a participant clicked to open (ranging from 0 to 2).

¹¹The other 48.2% were men. One participant responded to the gender question as "other."

Openness to general articles regarding the conflict

Openness to general articles regarding the conflict was measured in the same way as openness to articles supporting the out-group's perspective, except that the articles were the three articles that did not refer to the out-group supporting narrative.

Demographics

Participants provided socio-demographic information as they did in the previous three studies.

8.2 | Results and discussion

8.2.1 | Manipulation check

An ANOVA with emotion condition as the factor and sadness self-evaluations as the dependent variable showed the expected main effect for emotion, $F(2, 273) = 139.02, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.51$. In the sadness condition, sadness self-evaluations ($M = 4.79, SD = 1.25$) were higher than in the anger ($M = 3.47, SD = 1.50$) and the non-emotional ($M = 1.70, SD = 1.04$) conditions. A Bonferroni post hoc test revealed that for each of the conditions, sadness self-evaluations differed from one another (*all* p 's < 0.001). A similar ANOVA with emotion condition as the factor and anger self-evaluations as the dependent variable showed the expected main effect of the manipulation, $F(2, 273) = 75.65, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.36$. In the anger condition, anger self-evaluations ($M = 4.45, SD = 1.40$) were higher than in the non-emotional ($M = 1.79, SD = 1.40$) and in the sadness ($M = 3.69, SD = 1.75$) conditions. A Bonferroni post hoc test revealed that for each of the conditions, anger self-evaluations differed from one another (*all* p 's < 0.001).

8.2.2 | Out-group monetary allocation

To test whether political ideology had a lesser effect on monetary allocation in the sadness condition, we used a univariate ANOVA test. No significant effect was found for the emotion condition ($F(2, 270) = 1.64, p = .20, \eta^2 = 0.01$), but there was a significant effect for political ideology ($F(2, 270) = 73.24, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.21$) and a marginally significant interaction for the Political Ideology \times Emotional condition ($F(2, 270) = 2.67, p = .071, \eta^2 = 0.02$). The effects were such that in the non-emotional condition Rightists were less willing to allocate money to the out-group ($M = 30.92, SD = 24.38$) compared to Center-Leftists ($M = 51.95, SD = 23.52$). A similar effect appeared in the anger condition, where Rightists were less willing to allocate money to the out-group ($M = 24.39, SD = 21.68$) compared to Center-Leftists ($M = 58.31, SD = 21.16$). However, in the sadness condition, the differences between the allocation patterns between Rightists ($M = 26.55, SD = 27.29$) and Center-Leftists ($M = 45.20, SD = 21.40$) were smaller than the differences in the anger condition (additional analyses are available in the Supplementary Materials).

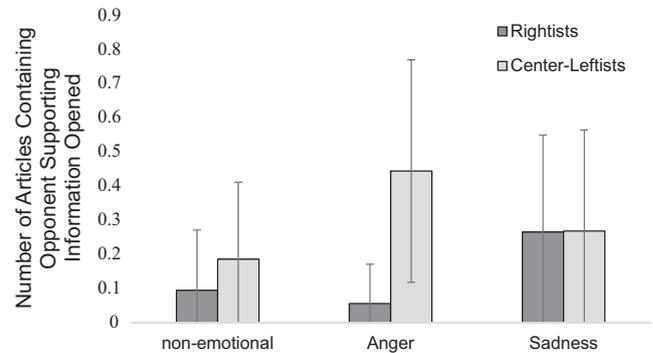


FIGURE 5 Openness to articles supporting the out-group's perspective as a function of political ideology in each experimental condition (Study 4)

8.2.3 | Openness to articles supporting the out-group perspective

We tested whether the emotion condition moderated the effect of political ideology on openness to articles supporting the out-group's perspective using a univariate ANOVA test. As predicted, Rightists and Center-Leftists differed in the number of articles supporting the Gaza citizens' perspective they wanted to read ($F(1, 270) = 3.88, p = .022, \eta^2 = 0.03$). Whereas Center-Leftists wanted to read more articles supporting the Gaza citizens' (the out-group) perspective ($M = 0.29, SD = 0.57$), Rightists were less interested in reading these articles (Rightists: $M = 0.13, SD = 0.41$). The analysis revealed no effect for the emotion condition on openness to the out-group's perspective ($F(2, 270) = 1.90, p = .152, \eta^2 = 0.01$). However, there was a significant interaction for the Political Ideology \times Emotion condition ($F(2, 270) = 3.88, p = .022, \eta^2 = 0.03$). The means for the number of clicked articles can be seen in Figure 5. In the non-emotional condition, Rightists opened on average fewer than one article supporting the out-group perspective ($M = 0.09, SD = 0.35$) while the Center-Leftists looked on average at almost two articles ($M = 0.19, SD = 0.45$). In the anger condition, Rightists looked at fewer articles supporting the out-group perspective ($M = 0.06, SD = 0.23$) compared to Center-Leftists ($M = 0.44, SD = 0.65$). However, in the sadness condition this pattern was eliminated since Rightists ($M = 0.27, SD = 0.57$) looked at the same number of articles as Center-Leftists ($M = 0.27, SD = 0.59$).

8.2.4 | Openness to articles regarding the conflict

We also tested whether sadness (compared to both the anger and non-emotional conditions) moderated the effect of political ideology on general interest in reading articles on the conflict (not specifically articles presenting the out-group's narrative). A univariate ANOVA showed that the two groups (Rightists and Center-Leftists) did not differ in the number of general articles on the conflict they chose ($F(1, 270) = 0.29, p = .589, \eta^2 = 0.001$). There was also no effect for

the emotion condition ($F(2, 270) = 0.48, p = .617, \eta^2 = 0.004$) and no significant interaction for the Political Ideology \times Emotion condition ($F(2, 270) = 0.51, p = .601, \eta^2 = 0.004$). That is, sadness moderated the effects of political ideology on openness to the out-group's narrative, but not general curiosity or motivation to seek out knowledge about the conflict.

The result of Study 4 replicated Study 2 during a period of escalation of the conflict. In addition, the results for Study 4 suggest that openness to the out-group's perspective was more sensitive to political ideology in the non-emotional and anger conditions and less so in the sadness condition. The emotion condition affected the pattern of information-seeking in terms of differences in the number of articles supporting the out-group's perspective chosen by Rightists and Center-Leftists. Whereas Right-Wing participants in the non-emotional and anger conditions rarely sought out information supporting the out-group's perspective, Center-Left-Wing participants sought out such information quite frequently. In the sadness condition, however, this pattern did not emerge, thus pointing to the lesser effect of ideology on information-seeking behavior. Importantly, the results appeared to suggest that the emotion condition did not affect pure interest, as indicated by the number of general articles regarding the conflict participants selected.

9 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

The goal of this series of studies was to examine the role of sadness in people's attitudes and decisions in inter-group conflicts. In the unstable environment of inter-group conflicts, people tend to seek an unambiguous and distinctive sense of self, which may encourage them to adhere to extreme ideologies and radicalized views (Hogg, 2015). Radicalization is related to acts and justification of violence and terrorism (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). Here, we tested how sadness affects the manifestation of political ideology, while aiming to reveal one possibly valuable outcome of sadness in intractable conflicts, namely, its depolarization effect.

The central hypothesis was based on two alternative perspectives that make similar predictions in intergroup conflict situations. The lesser connection between ideology and specific decisions may be affected by a reduction of certainty in preexisting information (Briñol et al., 2007) or a shift in the ordinary cognitive processing style (Hunsinger et al., 2012) which occurs when one is sad. It is important to note that the current studies focused on the depolarizing effect of sadness and not on the mechanism underlying this effect; thus, future studies should better disentangle the two theoretical frameworks to determine their validity and how they work in concert to induce the effect observed here (possibly by manipulating other variables aside from the experienced emotion).

We found that incidental sadness reduced the influence of ideology on reported conflict-related decisions such as support for prisoner exchanges and support for aggressive policies among participants who were led to experience sadness as compared to a

non-emotional condition (Study 1). Furthermore, we found that incidental sadness reduced the influence of ideology on the allocation of funds as a behavioral measure of in-group favoritism (Studies 2 and 4). Using a conflict-related manipulation (i.e., a real-world kidnapping situation) that generated integral sadness, we found the same effect of reduced dependence between political ideology and reported support for negotiation, compared to both the control and anger conditions (Study 3). Finally, in the fourth study the incidental nature of emotion was the most pronounced since participants were told that the initial questions (the manipulation) constituted a separate study from the rest of the questionnaire. In this study we used the behavioral measure implemented in Study 2 as well as a behavioral measure of openness to information (choosing to open an article link). The correlation between ideology and responses to both behavioral measures that appeared in the non-emotional and anger conditions was greatly reduced in the sadness condition.

The depolarizing effect of sadness on the manifestation of political ideology was thus evident across a variety of methods and measurements. We employed different sampling methods and used diverse manipulations. The manipulations included both incidental personal sadness, which involved a different emotion-inducing event for each participant, and integral sadness which involved the same event (a recent real-world kidnapping situation) for all participants. The outcome variables differed across studies and included reported as well as behavioral measures which were obtained in both calm and tense times in the conflict. The consistency of the results across all these variations lends credence to the validity of the findings, and specifically the robustness and generalizability of the sadness effect.

9.1 | Theoretical and applied significance

Previous studies have reported differing effects of sadness and anger, such as differences in causal judgments and policy endorsement of terrorist attacks (Sadler et al., 2005; Small et al., 2006), and differences in perceived polarization (Huber et al., 2015). In intergroup conflicts, it was suggested that sadness prompts systematic information processing (Renshon & Lerner, 2012). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study that has directly demonstrated a depolarizing effect of sadness in the form of political decisions during an ongoing intractable conflict. The effect appeared in the sadness condition but not in the anger condition and cannot be attributed to negative emotions in general.

This research makes an innovative contribution to the literature in that it examined sadness in experiments related to intractable real-world conflict situations which differ considerably from lab scenarios that have often been used in investigations of sadness. We stress the importance of the conflict context here, because when investigating the role emotions play in shaping people's views and actions in an intergroup context, the context itself is an important factor. Lab-tested responses are an important way to investigate basic human behavior, but cannot be applied in extreme social situations without theorizing,

and then empirically examining known effects within these exceptional and all-consuming situations (Halperin & Pliskin, 2015).

The current studies also investigated the influence of sadness as an integral (context-dependent) and incidental (unrelated to the context) emotion in this intense and explosive situation. The use of integral emotion is important because viewing the effects of the same emotion as integral and incidental may provide a better understanding of the emotion itself and its effects in extreme environments. The similarity of the results does not prove that they are guided by the same mechanisms; however, it may suggest that this could be a likely possibility.

Besides its theoretical implications, a better grasp of the depolarizing effect of sadness on conflict-related decisions may have important practical implications. As sadness appears to have a depolarizing effect, it could perhaps be used as a natural agent to reduce polarization processes. Though we are aware of the ethical considerations and do not suggest purposely inducing negative emotions in the general population, negative events are often already embedded in the intergroup conflict context. When attempting to minimize polarization, it may be better to refer to the sad instead of the anger-evoking aspects of a situation. That is, since sadness is often already present in the situation, it might be harnessed to facilitate the depolarization of attitudes and behavior.

9.2 | Limitations and future directions

These studies examined the effect of sadness as an emotion in a specific situation on a specific population; hence, future studies should continue to examine the effects of sadness on various populations and in other conflict situations to thoroughly understand its effects. We investigated the effect of sadness as an emotion in the normative high-power group population (Jewish-Israeli adults). To fully understand the effects of sadness in intergroup conflict situations, future studies should investigate the effects of sadness on other populations, such as people involved in other intergroup conflicts, members of subordinate groups as well as group members suffering from mental illness such as PTSD or affective disorders. Members of these different populations may have specific situational factors interacting with the effects of sadness. Future studies should also investigate the long-term effects of sadness both as an emotion but also as a long-term mood.

This research touched on some theoretical issues that still call for more extensive investigation. In the current studies, anger was used as a control emotion condition since it is a negative emotion traditionally used in comparison with sadness (Huber et al., 2015; Sadler et al., 2005; Small et al., 2006). It is also reasonable to expect for anger, much like sadness, to come to the fore in intractable conflict situations. However, in some studies, anger does not act like certain other negative emotions since it is an approach emotion and encompasses the appraisal of high power and certainty (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009; Harmon-Jones et al., 2003; Tiedens, 2001). In contrast, sadness is associated with a general sense of uncertainty (Briñol

et al., 2007) and a more cautious mindset (Forgas, 1999). Another emotion that is characterized by low power and low certainty is fear (Tiedens & Linton, 2001). Fear differs from sadness in that it refers to an event that had not occurred, but is similar to sadness in that it is associated with appraisals of low power. Future studies should examine whether the effect of sadness in intergroup conflicts is specific or emerges when manipulating other emotions that are related to low certainty, low power, or both (such as fear which is also related to uncertainty and low power).

Finally, despite the importance of depolarization in today's world, which is continuously shaken by the rise of extreme views, ideologies and movements, depolarization instigated by sadness may have some problematic facets. Short-term induction of sadness may have a fleeting effect that will not suffice to truly affect the course of conflicts whereas long-term induction of sadness may be impractical and unethical. By leading to a central tendency, depolarization may in some cases lead to indecision and inaction. Consequently, the tendency to reduce reliance on schemata might be unconstructive when individuals have a schema and information supporting the viability of conflict resolution, and sadness could lessen the support for conciliatory policies. This pattern of results that emerged in the findings for the Leftists in the current studies highlights that sadness is not a magic solution and there is a need for caution and discretion when choosing the population and the situations in which sadness is brought to the fore.

10 | CONCLUSION

Extremist or violent intergroup ideologies and actions are a pressing societal problem today worldwide. Thus, finding potential mechanisms that could lessen the effect of polarization and encourage reflective deliberation is a challenge of great importance. In our view, the possibility that an emotion which may unfortunately occur as a result of intractable violent conflicts could be a depolarizing agent to lessen radicalizing patterns and potentially advance conflict resolution is special and encouraging. We believe this research provides insights into one emotional path that may contribute to the reduction of polarization. However, even when further research has thoroughly explored the use of sadness as a depolarizing agent, the population exposed to such a manipulation, its intensity and timing should all be seriously considered. Thus, we hope that this work will serve as a starting point for continued research to explore the boundaries and potential practical applications of this effect.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was funded by a grant from the European Research Council (335607) to the third author.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as potential conflict of interest.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

All studies reported in this article have been performed according to APA ethical standards for the treatment of human subjects. All the studies were approved by the institutional ethics committee. In the introductions of the questionnaires participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, that they could cancel their participation at any time, and that their data would be treated anonymously. The informed consent of the participants was implied through survey completion.

DATA ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

The full data sets used in this research are archived at <https://osf.io/c9s3d/>. For additional information, please contact the corresponding author for questions regarding the study or data.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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How to cite this article: Gur T, Ayal S, Halperin E. A bright side of sadness: The depolarizing role of sadness in intergroup conflicts. *Eur J Soc Psychol*. 2021;51:68–83. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2715>