

Chapter 10

Hope During Conflict



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*Hope requires the conviction about the yet-unproven
(Eric Fromm 1968)*

Abstract The most deeply rooted international conflicts are termed *intractable conflicts*. Intractable conflicts are violent disputes that demand extensive investment from the rival parties and persist for a long time. These conflicts also share a more subjective quality: those embroiled in such severe disputes perceive them as innately irresolvable. Unsurprisingly, after decades of intergroup violence and hostility, citizens' hope for peace is almost absent. Yet hope is an essential component in the pursuit of any political change, including the pursuit of peace. To promote the resolution of intractable conflicts, it is vital to accurately assess the levels of hope for peace in these severe disputes and explore hope's origins and broader political consequences. This chapter addresses some of these issues by presenting the findings of a large-scale survey on hope for peace administered in one of the most longstanding intractable disputes today, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The survey is part of a larger global attitudes project that aims to map the hopes for peace of citizens living in conflict zones. Examining hope for peace among Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and Jews from Israel, this chapter reveals some of the demographic and sociopolitical antecedents of hope for peace and demonstrate hope's effect on broader political attitudes. Overall, findings suggest that hope is not only an obvious outcome of a successful peace process; it is also one of its sources.

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What is the role of hope in the lives of individuals and collectives mired in violent intergroup conflict? How does hope for peace form in the seemingly hopeless situations of intractable ethnonational conflicts, and why do despair and fear often prevail? Most importantly, does hope for peace have any impact on political outcomes? These questions are not only thought-provoking but also highly relevant to the political realities of millions of people around the world who are struggling for justice, equality, and peace. This chapter takes on the challenge of answering some of these questions by investigating the role of hope (or, more commonly, its absence) in an intense and violent ethnonational dispute—the intractable conflict between Jews and Palestinians living in the Holy Land. We should note that speculating whether there is hope for peace in Israel-Palestine (or in other conflict zones) is not, in any way, the goal of this chapter. As political psychologists, we are not concerned with our own predictions, but with the predictions of the citizens embroiled in these devastating disputes. We ask what makes people mired in intractable conflicts hopeful or hopeless, and investigate whether hope has any impact on their political attitudes and behaviors.

The theoretical and empirical insights of this chapter derive from research conducted in the last two decades on what has been termed “the social-psychological infrastructure of intractable conflicts” (Bar-Tal 2013; Halperin 2016). At its core, social-psychological analysis of conflicts looks at the psychological factors (e.g., emotions, belief systems, cognitive biases) that drive intergroup disputes, including deeply rooted international conflicts commonly referred to as intractable conflicts. Intractable conflicts, like the longstanding dispute between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and the protracted dispute in Israel-Palestine, are prolonged ethnonational conflicts that seem resilient to resolution (Zartman 2005). They involve fluctuating levels of violence, diplomatic hostility, and deep animosity between the rival groups. The social-psychological infrastructure of these conflicts refers to the rigid societal belief (e.g., the enemy is evil by nature, we are the sole victim of the conflict) and emotions (e.g., hate, fear, and anger) that evolve throughout the dispute (Bar-Tal 2007; Kriesberg 1993). Over the course of the conflict, these emotions and beliefs ossify and serve as a powerful agitator of conflict (Coleman 2003; Bar-Tal 2013).

Critically for the study of hope, members of the parties to the dispute adhere to a rigid set of perceptions, not only about themselves and their adversary but also about the conflict itself. One of those perceptions is that the conflict is inherently irresolvable (Rouhana and Bar-Tal 1998). In other words, the majority of citizens involved in intractable conflict think that resolution is simply impossible (Telhami and Kull 2013). Indeed, decades of violence, coupled with failed attempts to negotiate an agreement, can serve as convincing evidence that the conflict cannot be solved (Rouhana and Bar-Tal 1998). Yet, when the conflict is perceived as irresolvable, citizens become reluctant to engage in constructive behaviors towards peace (Cohen-Chen et al. 2015; Leshem 2019). Why should citizens make an effort to compromise if they believe the conflict is innately irreconcilable? Why should they get involved in taxing tasks like reflecting on their own wrongdoings, if the conflict can never be

resolved? There is simply no incentive to work for peace if peace is deemed unattainable.

The remainder of the chapter continues as follows. In the first part, we elaborate on the nature of intractable conflicts and expand on the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We then offer a brief summary of several studies on hope recently conducted within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second part of the chapter is devoted to the findings from the Israeli-Palestinian Hope Map Project, one of the most comprehensive projects on hope for peace in conflict zones. The study is unique in its scope and ability to compare the hopes of two rival groups locked in a live and heated conflict. We conclude by offering some theoretical and applicable implications.

10.1 Intractable Conflicts and the Hope for Peace

Intractable conflicts, like the one between India and Pakistan and the conflicts in Cyprus and Palestine-Israel, are prolonged international disputes that involve intergroup hostility and violence (Kriesberg 1993). These severe conflicts demand extensive material and psychological investment from the rival parties and impact many aspects of the day-to-day life of those involved in the dispute while also taking front stage in the international arena. Though the benefits of solving the conflict are evident to international actors and to the parties to the dispute, intractable conflicts seem to be resistant to resolution (Coleman 2003; Deutsch et al. 2006; Zartman 2005). The failed attempts to reach an agreement become the proof of the conflict's innate irreconcilability.

Counterintuitively, being skeptical about the prospects of peace can be advantageous for the people engulfed in the dispute. Skepticism minimizes the chances of frustration when the hopes for peace are dashed and exonerates citizens from responsibility and commitment. In addition, when the reality of the conflict has been the only reality for decades, perceiving the conflict as a stable situation extending into the far future can provide a sense of certainty and predictability (Fiske 2010; Thórisdóttir and Jost 2011). Regrettably, skepticism can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Kelman 2018). It feeds back into the reality of the conflict by crippling citizens' motivation to opt for peace. When no attempt is being made in the direction of resolution, the conflict persists (or even exacerbates), which, in turn, validates the sense of skepticism. Thus, at least theoretically, skeptical outlooks should not be regarded as merely a product of an ongoing violent dispute, but also as one of its origins (Kelman 2010; Pruitt 1997).

10.2 The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Roughly a century old, the conflict between the Palestinian and Jewish national movements encapsulates the typical features of intractable ethnonational conflicts (Azar et al. 1978). It is a prolonged and violent conflict that has had a devastating impact on local, regional, and international stability from 1948 onwards (Brecher 2017; Dowty 1999; Kelman 2010). The physical and psychological well-being of Israelis and Palestinians are constantly jeopardized by the violent and hostile reality of the conflict. To exemplify, there were 5748 conflict-related deaths in Palestine-Israel between January 2008 and September 2019, on average, more than one death each day. It is critical to note that the conflict is asymmetrical, with Israelis having political and military superiority over Palestinians. This asymmetry is apparent in the ratio of fatalities. From the 5748 conflict-related deaths mentioned above, 96% were Palestinians.¹

Several historical and geopolitical features of the conflict are directly relevant to hope for peace. The first is that the Jewish and Palestinian national movements share the same but seemingly incompatible objective—securing ownership over the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea (Kelman 1999). It is therefore not surprising that from the beginning of the twentieth century, the two movements were immensely antagonistic to each other (Telhami 2005). Antagonism is so ingrained that peace with the hated enemy seems utterly impossible. The second factor is that in the contested territory, smaller than the size of New Jersey, live, as of 2020, about 14 million people, approximately half of them Jewish and half of them Palestinian. The proximity of the groups results in constant friction, manifested in full-fledged wars, military incursions, assassinations of leaders, kidnapping of civilians, popular uprisings, mass arrests, indiscriminate shelling and bombing, and countless violent incidents of other types. The ongoing violence does not seem to subside and, consequently, generates the perception that it never will.

The third attribute is that the conflict is one of the most notable examples of futile international peace interventions. High caliber international mediators such as Henry Kissinger and Ban Ki-Moon, have been coming to the Middle East since the 1950s to establish common ground for negotiations. A full-time diplomatic envoy, the International Quartet on the Middle East, was established in 2002 to consolidate the diplomatic powers of the United Nations, the European Union, the USA, and Russia in order to stimulate the peace process, but to no avail. Even the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, made by the most powerful regional actor in the middle east, the Arab League, has been, as of November 2019, unsuccessful in creating the conditions for a peace agreement. Dashed hopes for international intervention that will bring a just and sustainable peace for the region decreases the already low hopes for peace among Israelis and Palestinians.

¹OCHA Data on Casualties (<https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>).

10.3 The Hope for Peace in Israel-Palestinian

The hopelessness of Israelis and the Palestinians regarding the likelihood of peace is demonstrated in a public poll showing that about half of Israelis and Palestinians believe that the conflict will never end (Telhami and Kull 2013). Low levels of hope were also reported in 1976 by 59% of Israeli Jews who thought lasting peace is simply unachievable (Stone 1982). However, several studies show that Jewish-Israelis have *high* hopes for peace. For example, a study published in 2008 found that Jewish-Israelis' hope for peace is quite high, with a mean score of 4.1 on a scale from 1 to 5 (Halperin et al. 2008). Antonovsky and Arian (1972) also report high levels of hope for peace amongst Israelis such that "hope for peace with the Arabs" scored higher than hope for national prosperity and economic stability put together. How can these mixed results be explained?

Webster's dictionary defines hope as "a desire accompanied by an expectation of or belief in fulfillment." Hope for peace can thus be understood as a combination of two factors, a wish (i.e., desire) to attain peace and some expectation (i.e., assessment of likelihood) that peace can be attained. Psychological examinations support this proposition by revealing that wish and expectation are the two core components of hope (Erickson et al. 1975; Staats and Stassen 1985; Stotland 1969).² With this definition in mind, we can reinterpret the seemingly contradictory results found in the studies above. It could be the case that participants exhibited high levels of wishing for peace but low expectations that peace would materialize.

Indeed, a closer look at the questions used in these studies reveals that one of the reasons for the different levels of hope is conceptual, namely, that hope was defined, operationalized, and reported in fundamentally different ways. For example, Stone (1982) was reporting participants' hope for peace but was measuring only participants' *expectations* for resolution, not the intensity of their wishes to attain it. Antonovsky and Arian (1972) also asked participants to report their "hopes for peace" but were de facto, gauging only participants' *wishes* for peace, not their expectation about its feasibility. Support for this explanation was obtained in a study that separately gauged Jewish Israelis' wishes for peace and their expectations that peace will materialize (Leshem 2017). Results show that the wish for peace is high, but the expectations are low. In a follow-up study conducted 2 years later, no significant change was detected in the (high) wishes or the (low) expectations for peace, demonstrating the relative stability of both components. As exemplified in this edited volume, there are many definitions of hope. However, we found the straightforward definition of hope as a construct combining the wish to attain a goal (in our case, "peace") and the expectations of attaining it as a useful definition for the study of conflicts (e.g., Staats and Stassen 1985; Stotland 1969).

²We acknowledge the fact that many hope scholars use other definitions of hope (e.g., Averill et al. 1990; Scioli et al. 2011). However, our goal-oriented approach led us to focus on the most basic elements of hope, namely wishes and expectations.

When discussing the hopes for peace of Jews and Palestinians, it should be mentioned that, given the asymmetrical nature of the conflict, peace might mean one thing for Jewish-Israelis and another for Palestinians. The low-power group (in this case Palestinians) might tend to associate peace with the political condition where justice and equality are restored. In contrast, the high-power group (in the case Jewish-Israelis) may see peace as harmonious relationships within the existing asymmetrical power structure. We should therefore take note that while both groups might hope for the ending of the conflict, the Palestinians' hope will also include their aspiration for self-determination, whereas the Jewish Israelis' hope will include their wish for cooperation and partnership. A number of studies, like the ones mentioned above, measured Jewish-Israelies' hope for peace (e.g., Antonovsky and Arian 1972; Cohen-Chen, Crisp, and Halperin 2015; Halperin et al. 2008; Leshem 2017; 2019; Leshem, Klar, and Flores 2016; Stone 1982). Unfortunately, there have been almost no studies on the hopes for peace among Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories. Several observations might help to form some initial speculations about Palestinians' hope for peace.

In 1974, Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, was the first non-state representative ever to speak at the UN General Assembly. In a later published manifesto about his UN speech, Arafat proclaimed he was fighting for freedom and hope. "I am a rebel, and freedom is my cause... Why therefore should I not dream and hope?" (1975, p. 16). Arafat was clear that his dream for a peaceful future in Palestine means liberating the land from Zionist imperialism and attaining political freedom for Palestinians. As he saw it, the struggle for independence is the struggle for peace. Another example of the inherent connection between peace and the Palestinian struggle for statehood is a statement by Abdel-Shai, one of the delegates at the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference who expressed the idea that for Palestinians, peace is tantamount to justice (resolving the injustices of past wrongdoings) and freedom (sovereignty and statehood). Palestinian hopelessness, in that sense, results from unfulfilled hopes for justice and political freedom.

When Palestinians' aspirations for justice and statehood are not met, despair will rise. According to Butler (2002), high levels of despair led many young Palestinian men to participate in suicide bombings during the Second Intifada. Eyad El Sarraj, the director of the Gaza Community Mental Health Program, argues that violence escalated during the Second Intifada due to the psychological factor of despair, "...the hopelessness that comes from a situation that keeps getting worse, a despair where living becomes no different from dying. Desperation is a very powerful force...it propels people to actions or solutions that previously would have been unthinkable" (Butler 2002, p. 72).

The hopelessness of citizens enmeshed in conflict stems from the widespread belief that the ingroup, the outgroup, and the conflict itself are fixed and unchangeable (Cohen-Chen et al. 2017). This hopelessness, in turn, leads to a general reluctance to support peacebuilding (Leshem 2019) and compromise (Cohen-Chen et al. 2015) and might lead low-power group members to engage in violent actions (Butler 2002). Given these detrimental consequences, the questions then become, can we increase the hope for peace? And if so, how? These question were partially

answered by Cohen-Chen et al. (2014, 2015) and Halperin et al. (2011) who showed that group members' hope can be induced by changing their perception about the malleability of groups, conflicts, and the world in general. In their experimental paradigms, Israeli Jews were exposed to information that suggests that groups, conflicts, and the world in general are dynamic and malleable.³ After being exposed to the information, participants' hope for peace (narrowly operationalized only as expectation) was measured. Results indicate that expectations for peace increased among those who learned that groups, conflicts, and the world in general were everchanging. Furthermore, the increase in the expectations for peace resulted in an increase in support for concession making (Cohen-Chen et al. 2015).

Utilizing a new experimental paradigm, Leshem (2019) showed that exposing Jewish-Israelis to optimistic messages conveyed in a short video posted by a Palestinian blogger, increased their hopes for peace on both the wish and expectation components. In fact, the increase in the wish and expectations for peace was more apparent among political hawks, who commonly exhibit lower desires and expectations for peace (Leshem 2017). Moreover, using a follow-up survey, the study revealed that hope induced by the short video was still high after violent confrontations broke out between Israeli forces and Palestinians. Most importantly, Leshem (2019) demonstrated the behavioral consequences of induced hope for peace. It seems that participants who were exposed to the optimistic message conveyed by the Palestinian blogger were more supportive of a real-world peace-building initiative than participants in the control group.

Overall, the literature on hope inducement suggests that by using specific cues, hope for peace can be instilled among citizens entrapped in intractable conflicts (Cohen-Chen et al. 2014, 2015; Leshem 2019; Leshem et al. 2016). However, the findings are limited because these studies were conducted only on Israeli Jews. As mentioned, research on the hopes for peace of Palestinians is scant (but see: Sagiv and Adwan 2006). "The Hope Map Project," introduced in the next section, sought to address this gap by surveying the hope for peace among both Israelis and Palestinians.

10.4 The Hope Map Project

10.4.1 Background

The Hope Map Project is a global research project aimed at exploring the hopes for peace of people living in conflict zones. Three main objectives guide the project. The first is to identify the demographic and socio-political antecedents of hope for peace. Are women more hopeful than men as to the prospects of peace? Are the young more hopeful than the old? Are the religious more hopeful than the secular? And how does

³Halperin et al.'s study (2011) was conducted also among Palestinians.

ideology affect hope? Obtaining such insights would greatly contribute to our knowledge on hope and how it forms and proliferates in times of conflict. The second goal is to identify the direct consequences of hope for peace. For example, we can test whether hope for peace predicts citizens' support for peace building or whether their support or opposition to peacebuilding is better explained by their political ideology or other factors. The third and final goal, which we hope to achieve in the longer run, is to offer a comprehensive comparison of hope for peace across conflict zones. Comparing the hope for peace in places such as Cyprus, Colombia, Israel-Palestine, and the Caucasus could teach us not only about the variations in the hopes for peace in different geopolitical contexts but also about the similarities that cut across cultures and political circumstances.

The first phase of the Hope Map Project was conducted simultaneously in Israel and the Palestinian Territories in the summer of 2017 and provides a detailed account of Palestinians' and Israelis' hopes for the future. The sample consisted of 500 Jewish-Israelis and 500 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Data were collected in only 3 days among representative samples of adult Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. The swift collection of data minimized the potential influence of conflict-related events that can occur during data collection. The simultaneous collection of data among the two societies increases our ability to compare the hopes for peace of Palestinians and Israelis.⁴

10.4.2 Results

Our study was designed to capture citizens' hope for peace on the two core components of hope—wishes and expectations. Thus, Palestinians and Jewish-Israeli participants were asked to rate how much they wished for peace and how much they expected peace to materialize. As noted, Palestinians and Jewish Israelis understand peace in distinct ways. Thus, for the purpose of this study, we provided participants with a broad definition of peace we term “generic reciprocal peace.” The definition is worded such that it may incorporate a wide array of interpretations of what peace is, as long as these interpretations do not come at the expense of the basic needs of either group. The basic needs were spelled out: security and safety for Israelis and freedom and statehood for Palestinians. Participants were thus asked to

⁴In all, the samples represent the adult population of Jews living in Israel and Palestinians living in the OT (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics 2018; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2017; Pew Research Center 2016). The margin of error for each national sample is $\pm 4.38\%$ and for the entire sample $\pm 3.01\%$ at the 95 CI. The full report can be obtained from the authors (see also Leshem et al. 2019).

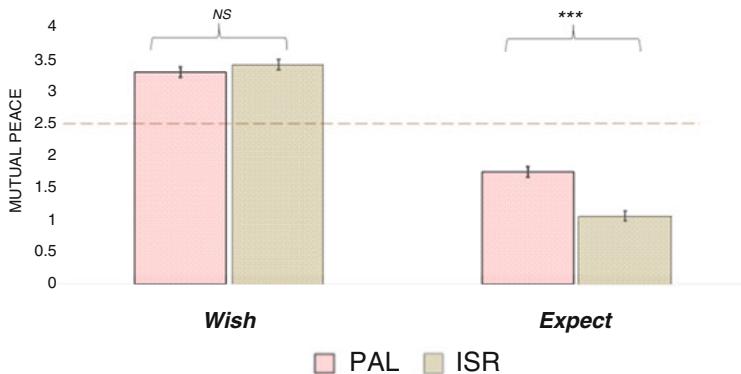


Fig. 10.1 Hope for peace by nationality. Note: Bars represent margins of two regression models, one predicting wish and the other expectations. Demographics and sociopsychological measures were controlled for. Two-tailed significance, $p^{***} < .001$. Scale from 0 to 5, dashed line represents the midpoint of the scale

rate how much they wished that generic reciprocal peace would materialize and how much they thought it could actually materialize.

Results show that when it comes to the wish for generic reciprocal peace, Jewish Israelis and Palestinians exhibit identical and quite high wishes (Fig. 10.1).⁵ In all, 77% of participants scored on or above the midpoint of the scale. This is quite an encouraging finding as it seems that both populations not only support the idea of a peace agreement that will address the basic needs of both peoples, but have strong aspirations for it. Second, it is apparent that expectations for reciprocal peace are low, with less than 25% of all participants scoring above the midpoint of the scale. Interestingly, it seems that Palestinians exhibit much higher expectations of peace compared to Jewish Israelis. Given the asymmetrical nature of the conflict, the fact that Palestinians have higher expectations for reciprocal peace might appear surprising. More than 50 years of Israeli military control over the Palestinian people might seem like a good reason for Palestinians to be skeptical about the possibility of peace. Nevertheless, it appears that Palestinians believe that reciprocal peace is possible much more than Israelis do. We provide a tentative explanation for this finding in the discussion section.

Demographic Antecedents of Hope for Peace: Next, we report on the effects of demographic measures on the hope for peace in Israel-Palestine.⁶ First, it appears that across societies, religiosity had a negative effect on both hope components. The more one is religious, the less one wishes for peace and expects it to materialize. This trend might be explained by the religious origin of the conflict that has been shown to

⁵Results reflect findings from two regression models, one predicting wishes and one predicting expectations. The models included nationality and collected demographic and sociopsychological measures as predictors.

⁶Unless otherwise stated, the effects were similar for both populations.

impede peace in Israel-Palestine (Canetti et al. 2019). It also seems that women wish for peace more than men and have firmer beliefs in the feasibility of peace compared to men. Further scrutiny shows that most of this effect was driven by the difference between men and women in the Palestinian society.

Age also predicted hope such that the older one is, the more one wishes and expects peace. Looking at each sample separately, a more nuanced picture unfolds. It appears that the effect of age on the wish for peace was driven by the Israeli sample, and the effect of age on expectations was driven by the Palestinian sample. That said, in both national samples, the direction of the effects were always positive, demonstrating that the younger generation in both societies has less wishes and expectations for peace than the older generations. As for political ideology, in line with past studies (e.g., Shuman et al. 2016), dovish political ideology predicted higher wishes and higher expectations for peace. Looking separately at each component of hope, results demonstrate that political doves from both communities have higher expectations for peace compared to political hawks. However, doves had more wishes for peace than hawks only in the Israeli sample. Among Palestinians, doves and hawks exhibited similar levels of the wish for peace.

10.4.3 Sociopsychological Antecedences of Hope for Peace

A central endeavor in the study of the sociopsychology of conflict is the identification of the sociopsychological factors that hamper or facilitate conflict resolution. Within the framework of the Hope Map Project, we sought to explore several sociopsychological antecedences of hope and hopelessness. We have reported elsewhere on two interesting findings. The first is that Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians form their hopes for peace based, to some extent, on their erroneous appraisals of their “enemy’s” hope (Leshem and Halperin 2020a). It seems that members of both groups underestimate their adversary’s wish for peace, and this, in turn, leads them to decrease their own wishes and expectations for peace. The second finding concerns the nuanced relationship between fear and hope during conflict (Leshem and Halperin 2020b). Results show that the more citizens feel threatened by the *likelihood* of future conflict, the less they expect peace to materialize, whereas the more they feel threatened by the *severity* of future conflict, the more they wish peace would materialize. In this chapter, we focus on a new set of antecedences of hope amidst conflict. Specifically, we look at the role of political efficacy and acceptance of uncertainty as predictors of citizens’ hope for peace.

Political efficacy refers to people’s belief that citizens can influence political outcomes (Balch 1974; Craig and Maggiotto 1982). People that score high on political efficacy believe that the general public has some power within the political sphere, while people low on political efficacy believe that citizens have no way of influencing political processes. We hypothesized that high scores on political efficacy would predict higher expectations for peace because both constructs are related to the belief that social change is possible. However, political efficacy was not

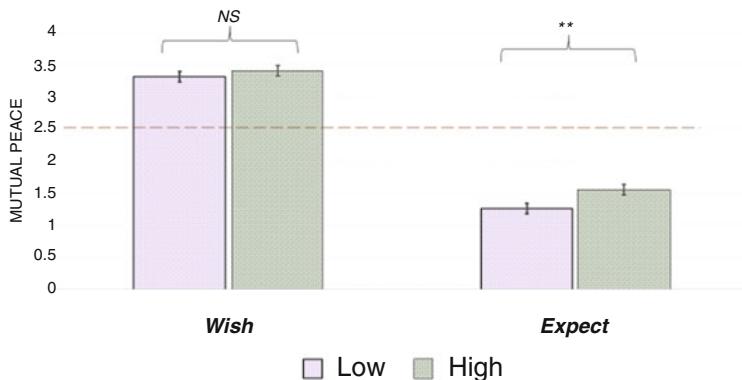


Fig. 10.2 Hope for peace by political efficacy. Note: Bars represent margins of two regression models, one predicting wish and the other expectations. Demographics and sociopsychological measures were controlled for. Two-tailed significance, $p^{**} < .01$. Scale from 0 to 5, dashed line represents the midpoint of the scale

hypothesized to predict the wish for peace, because citizens' belief in their own ability to influence political processes is likely to be independent of their desire to influence them.

Acceptance of uncertainty pertains to peoples' tendency to accept uncertainty as an integral part of life (Freeston et al. 1994). Some people have a hard time with uncertainty, while others are more at ease with uncertainty and unpredictability. As stated earlier, the extreme duration of intractable conflicts makes people experience the conflict as a familiar and predictable—however dire—reality (Fiske 2010). Peace, on the other hand, is strange and unfamiliar for those who have known conflict all their lives and therefore entails uncertainty. We thus hypothesized that people who accept uncertainty would exhibit higher wishes for peace compared to those who seek certainty and predictability. Acceptance of uncertainty was not hypothesized to affect the expectation component of hope.

Results show that political efficacy predicted participants' expectations for peace in the hypothesized direction (Fig. 10.2). The more one believes in the capacity of citizens to impact political reality, the greater one's expectations for peace. This finding illustrates the connection between bottom-up social change and intergroup peace. When people believe in their ability to change their political future, they are inclined to believe that peace is possible. As hypothesized, political efficacy did not influence how much Israelis and Palestinians wished for peace, demonstrating that the desires to attain peace are separate from the belief in citizens' perceptions of agency.

A different pattern emerges when looking at the acceptance of uncertainty as a predictor of hope (Fig. 10.3). As hypothesized, those who accept uncertainty as an integral part of life had higher wishes for peace than those who are not comfortable with uncertainty. Stated differently, people who are more at ease with uncertainty allow themselves to wish for peace while those that seek certainty do not dare to wish

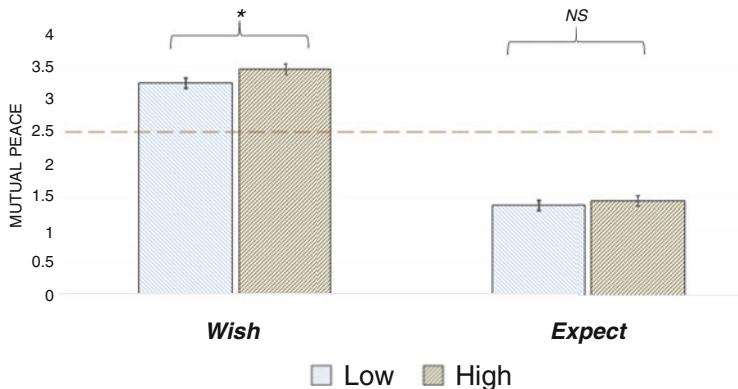


Fig. 10.3 Hope for peace by acceptance of uncertainty. Note: Bars represent margins of two regression models, one predicting wish and the other expectations. Demographics and sociopsychological measures were controlled for. Two-tailed significance, $p^* < .05$. Scale from 0 to 5, dashed line represents the midpoint of the scale

for peace as much (though this trend was pronounced among Palestinians but did not reach statistical significance among Jewish Israelis). At least to some extent, those who need certainty, prefer the familiar and predictable, though painful, reality of the conflict. As hypothesized, acceptance of uncertainty did not predict the expectation for peace. Those who accept uncertainty and those who do not have similar (low) expectations that peace in Israel-Palestine will materialize.

10.4.4 *Hope as a Predictor of Support for Peacebuilding*

The above analyses provide insights about some of the antecedences of hope for peace. However, it is equally important to know if being hopeful has implications for conflict resolution. Therefore, the second aim of the study was to test whether hope has any influence on peace-promoting outcomes; in this case, support for bi-national peacebuilding initiatives. Due to the high levels of intergroup hostility and distrust, citizens embroiled in intractable conflict are generally against bi-national peacebuilding initiatives (Leshem 2019). We suspected that hope for peace (or lack thereof) is a determining factor in citizens' support or opposition to bi-national peacebuilding programs. Those who have strong desires and expectations for peace are postulated to be much more supportive of bi-national peacebuilding programs than those with lower wishes for peace and those who are skeptical about its feasibility. After all, why support these programs if one does not wish for peace or simply believes that peace is impossible. We should also consider the possibility that support for peacebuilding is better explained by other factors such as political ideology or religious observance. Figure 10.4 presents the relative

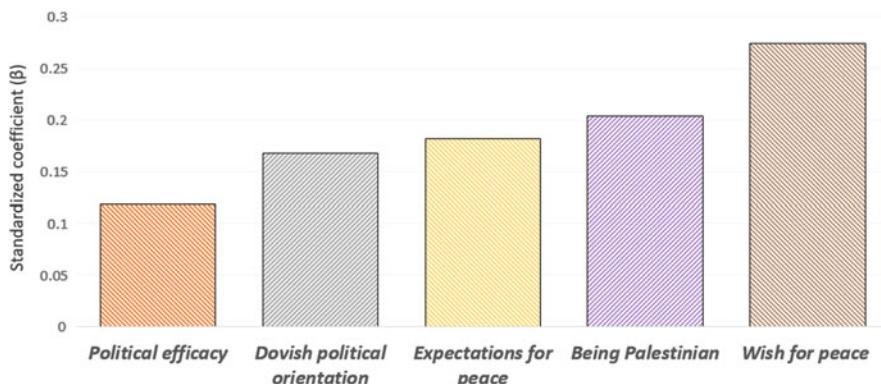


Fig. 10.4 Predictors of support for bi-national peacebuilding initiatives. Note: Entries are standardized OLS coefficients of a regression model predicting support for peacebuilding with all collected variables entered as predictors. The model explains 24% of the variance of the outcome variable. All coefficients $p < .001$. Non-significant coefficients are not displayed

contribution of collected measures on participants' support for peacebuilding. Trends were similar in the two populations unless stated otherwise.

Results demonstrate the predictive power of the wish and expectation for peace on support for peacebuilding. In fact, wishing for peace is the most robust predictor of support for peacebuilding in the entire sample and each national sample. Simply put, even after accounting for the influence of all other factors, the desire for peace remains the strongest predictor of support for peacebuilding. Expectations for peace also significantly contribute to Israelis' and Palestinians' support for peacebuilding in the expected direction. The more one believes peace is possible, the more one supports peacebuilding efforts. Overall, these findings demonstrate the centrality of hope as a catalyst for peace-promoting outcomes.

It also appears that Palestinians are much more inclined to support bi-national peacebuilding projects than Jewish-Israelis. Whether or not this is a surprising finding is an interesting question in and of itself, as proponents of each party try to emphasize the willingness of their side and the unwillingness of their rival to support peacebuilding efforts. However, Palestinians showed significantly more support for peacebuilding than Jewish Israelis even after controlling for covariates.⁷

⁷Some differences between the samples were found. In the Palestinian sample, political ideology did not predict support for peacebuilding, but gender did such that men were more supportive of peacebuilding than women.

10.5 Discussion

Herb Kelman, one of the most notable facilitators of track-two diplomatic efforts between Israelis and Palestinians, identified hope as a prerequisite for constructive negotiations. “This sense of possibility contributes to creating self-fulfilling prophecies in a positive direction, to counteract the negative self-fulfilling prophecies that result from the mutual distrust and pervasive pessimism about finding a way out that normally characterize protracted conflicts.” (Kelman 2010, p. 393). More recent studies also highlighted hope as a central factor influencing the dynamics of intractable ethnonational conflict (Cohen-Chen et al. 2014; Halperin et al. 2008; Hasan-Aslih et al. 2018; Leshem 2017, 2019; Rosler et al. 2017). This chapter contributes to the growing literature on hope by offering insights on some of the antecedences and consequences of hope during conflicts.

First, it appears that the more citizens believe in their capacity to be agents of political change, the more they believe that peace is possible. This finding suggests that, at least to some extent, citizens entrapped in an intractable conflict believe that peace is a bottom-up process. If achieving peace was perceived to be a purely top-down process where the success or failure of peace agreements depended solely on leaders, political efficacy would not have influenced citizens’ expectations for peace. Second, we found that accepting uncertainty as a natural part of life allows for greater wishes for peace. This finding lends empirical support for Eric Fromm’s iconic remark that “Hope requires the conviction about the yet-unproven” (1968).

Two additional points that emerge from our analyses should be accentuated. The first is that Palestinians’ expectation for peace is higher than Jewish Israelis’. At first glance, this finding may appear counterintuitive because, if anything, the adverse conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip should make Palestinians extremely skeptical about the prospect of peace. However, it could be the case that for Palestinians, pessimism is not an option. Their struggle for political independence necessitates a strong belief in the feasibility of peace and its assumed result—political independence. In contrast, Jewish Israelis, who are currently living under more favorable circumstances, can afford to be more pessimistic about the possibility of peace.

The second point is that hope is one of the sources of conflict transformation. The question of whether hope can generate social change has been debated by thinkers and scholars since Spinoza. However, empirical research testing whether hope is a catalyst for social change has begun only recently (e.g., Cohen-Chen et al. 2014; Leshem et al. 2016). This chapter adds to this line of work by showing hope’s pivotal role in creating the conditions for political change. The two components of hope predicted Jewish Israelis’ and Palestinians’ support for bi-national peacebuilding efforts. In fact, the wish for peace predicted participants’ support for peacebuilding over and above other factors, even more than political dovishness.

We would also like to highlight some implications for conflict practitioners working in conflict zones. People working in peacebuilding and reconciliation projects, organizers of grassroots dialogue groups, and others working to establish

sustainable partnerships across religious and ethnic divides have incredibly challenging jobs. In their arduous work, these peacemakers may overlook hope as a catalyst for social change. As this and other studies in the field demonstrate, hope may have a pivotal role in promoting constructive behaviors towards conflict transformation. When peace is advanced, hopes will naturally rise, creating a cyclical reaction, this time with a positive outcome. However, much more research is needed to understand how to best utilize hope in the pursuit of peace and conciliation between rival societies.

10.6 Conclusions

Long-lasting violent conflicts push hope for peace to its limits and thus provide a unique setting for theoretical examination and empirical scrutiny. One of the most profound conclusions is that people can live in harsh political circumstances but hold optimistic views about the future, while others could be living in benign political conditions but adopt a pessimistic outlook about future war and peace. Stated more generally, it seems that citizens' hopes for the future may be consistent with their political circumstance or in defiance of it.

Yet our work cannot stop at understanding how hope functions during conflict. We must galvanize the knowledge on hope to contribute to conflict transformation. Other chapters in this book speak about the transformative powers of hope in the domains of health, well-being, and religious faith. This chapter provides insights into the transformative potential of hope in the context of adverse political circumstances. Research on hope amidst conflict is in its early stages. The Global Hope Map Project is one of the first to take the research on hope into the heart of violent conflict zones, where hope is a scarce resource. We *hope* it will not be the last.

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