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Abstract

This study explores the profound impact of in-group bias on state behavior and political decision-making through the lens of the 2023 Israeli-Gaza conflict. Utilizing Social Identity Theory, we investigated how group identities shape alliances and sway international support, even in the face of significant ethical challenges. Our research uncovers the extensive nature of in-group bias, extending its relevance beyond this conflict to broader social and political contexts. These findings challenge traditional explanations and provide a deeper understanding of why certain countries continue to support allies unwaveringly despite their participation in civilian atrocities. By examining the junction between group identity and political dynamics, we offer novel insights into the cognitive biases that perpetuate political alliances and propose approaches to alleviate these biases.

Competing interests: The author declares none.

Identity, Bias, and Conflict: Examining In-Group Dynamics in Contemporary Politics

Introduction

The Israeli-Gaza conflict of 2023, marked by significant civilian casualties, has brought to light the complexities of international support and alliances. Despite overwhelming evidence of humanitarian crises, nations such as the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany have continued to support Israel through military aid and diplomatic backing. Is such behavior solely driven by realpolitik calculations and strategic interests or are there deeper psychological underpinnings? In this context, I argue that attributing these actions solely to national interests or callous disregard for human life is an oversimplification of the situation.

This paper seeks to explore the complexity of this situation by employing Social Identity Theory to analyze how group identities and biases affect alliance formation and political decisions, even when faced with significant ethical dilemmas. Developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, Social Identity Theory provides a robust framework for understanding the interplay between personal identities and the social groups to which individuals belong. By examining the continued support for Israel amidst the Israeli-Gaza conflict, this study posits that in-group bias plays a crucial role in shaping political alliances and responses[1].

Our investigation goes beyond traditional explanations of political behavior to incorporate psychological insights into group behavior, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of international support and alliances. This study not only addresses the immediate context of

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[1] Henri Tajfel and John Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations, ed. W.G. Austin and S. Worchel (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1979), 33–47.

the Israeli-Gaza conflict in 2023 but also provides broader insights into the mechanisms of in-group bias that affect global political landscapes. By bridging the gap between psychological theories and political analysis, we aim to foster a critical re-evaluation of established assumptions within the political sphere and encourage strategies to mitigate conflict and promote equitable global interactions.

Main Theoretical Assumptions

Since the dawn of time, humans have sought to enhance their abilities and defend themselves against the forces of nature and human adversaries. One of the most effective methods for increasing an individual's power is to harness the collective power of others to achieve common goals and provide mutual protection. This principle underlies the creation of institutions such as the police and army, which serve as a collective force to deter crime, enforce societal laws, protect private property, and defend communities against external enemies[2]. Similarly, humans are born into families and kinship networks that provide them with initial guidance, life principles, and a sense of belonging, which it is noy just a unique behavior to humans; it is also observed in other species such as chimpanzees, sheep, and other animals which rely on their groups for survival and efficiency.

This formation of various bonds and groups inevitably leads to interactions between individuals and groups, whether positive or negative, and has become a significant area of investigation for many scholars. One of the most influential theories exploring this phenomenon of interaction is Social Identity Theory, which we will examine further to

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[2] Peter J Richerson and Robert Boyd, "The Evolution of Subjective Commitment to Groups: A Tribal Instincts Hypothesis," *Russell Sage Foundation*, 2001.

establish the theoretical assumptions that will help us gain a deeper understanding of our case study on the Israeli-Gaza conflict in 2023.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory[3], a concept pioneered by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, examines the intriguing relationship between personal identities and the social communities to which we belong. From the moment of our birth, we begin the process of categorizing ourselves within familial units, navigating the social terrain of educational institutions, and ultimately integrating them into professional environments. The theory emphasizes that these social spheres, alongside fundamental constructs such as religion, nationality, and race, contribute to the development of our social identity, which influences how we perceive ourselves within the larger social realm [4].

The categorization of ourselves and others into social groups, encompassing aspects such as religion, ethnicity, nationality, political beliefs, and even sporting allegiances, serves as the foundation of our social structure. This structure fosters the formation of in-groups, where individuals are inclined to be surrounded by others who share similar characteristics and values. Within these in-groups, a strong sense of camaraderie and belonging emerged. Conversely, this social structure leads to the perception of out-groups, consisting of those with whom we share fewer commonalities such as beliefs, colors, race, or blood kinship. The

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[3] Henri Tajfel and John Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations, ed. W.G. Austin and S. Worchel (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1979), 33–47.

[4] Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes (London: Taylor and Francis, 2006), doi:10.4324/9780203135457/SOCIAL-IDENTIFICATIONS-DOMINIC-ABRAMS-MICHAEL-HOGG.

theory emphasizes that individual perceptions of out-groups can be shaped by factors such as the prominence of our in-group identity and the perceived level of competition between groups, which could lead to cognitive biases in the individual's behavior towards these out-groups.

The Social Identity Theory provides a robust framework for understanding the mechanisms underlying group dynamics. It suggests that individuals strive for a positive social identity, which is derived from their group memberships. This desire for a positive social identity often leads to in-group favoritism, where individuals prefer and prioritize the needs and perspectives of their in-group over those of their out-group[5]. This favoritism can manifest in various ways, ranging from subtle biases in social interactions to overt acts of discrimination and prejudice.

Conflict and Cognitive Biases

Conflict situations can serve as magnifying glasses, intensifying preexisting cognitive biases. Research has demonstrated that our natural inclination to classify ourselves into in-groups and to perceive out-groups differently is heightened by the specter of conflict. Shared beliefs and cultural similarities within in-groups further compounded this bias, fostering a sense of shared identity and directing actions. The deep attachment we feel towards our in-group, driven by the benefits of acceptance and belonging, can lead to a fear of the group's dissolution, a fear as intense as the fear of our own well-being [6]. Consequently, we favor our

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[5] Henri Tajfel, Social Identity and Intergroup Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[6] Klaus Abbink and Donna Harris, "In-Group Favouritism and out-Group Discrimination in Naturally Occurring Groups," PLoS ONE 14, no. 9 (2019), doi:10.1371/JOURNAL.PONE.0221616.

in-group, exhibiting bias towards their perspectives and actions [7]. This dynamic, as individuals become entrenched in their beliefs, can exacerbate the existing polarization and fuel hostility between groups.

Cognitive biases such as confirmation bias, where individuals favor information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs, and fundamental attribution error, where individuals attribute the behavior of out-group members to their inherent characteristics rather than situational factors, further entrench these divisions [8]. These biases can lead to a cycle of mistrust and miscommunication, in which each group's actions are interpreted through a lens of suspicion and hostility.

Politically, this confirmation bias can confirmation bias can wield a significant influence on decision-making in conflict scenarios. When political leaders and policymakers are influenced by confirmation bias, they are more likely to seek information and intelligence that supports their preconceived notions and ignore evidence that contradicts their views. This can lead to flawed policy decisions and an inability to accurately assess the intentions

[7] Jennifer Crocker and Riia Luhtanen, "Collective Self-Esteem and Ingroup Bias," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 60 (1990): 60; Matthew J. Hornsey and Armin Imani, "Criticizing Groups from the Inside and the Outside: An Identity Perspective on the Intergroup Sensitivity Effect," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30, no. 3 (March 2004): 365–83, doi:10.1177/0146167203261295.

[8] Miles Hewstone, Mark Rubin, and Hazel Willis, "Intergroup Bias," *Annual Review of Psychology* 53 (2002): 575–604, doi:10.1146/ANNUREV.PSYCH.53.100901.135109; Abigail Gertner, Franklin Zaromb, and Richard D Roberts, "The Assessment of Biases in Cognition Development and Evaluation of an Assessment Instrument for the Measurement of Cognitive Bias," 2016.

and actions of other states or political entities, potentially escalating conflicts and reducing the chances of peaceful resolution [9].

The fundamental attribution error, on the other hand, can lead to the demonization of out-groups. By attributing the negative behaviors of out-group members to their inherent characteristics rather than situational factors, individuals and political leaders may develop a skewed perception of the out-group. This could result in harsher policies, increased military aggression, and a general lack of empathy in the political sphere. It also reinforces negative stereotypes and makes it more challenging to find common ground for dialogue and cooperation[10].

Theories Explaining Intergroup Conflict

Numerous theories have been developed to explain hostilities and conflicts between groups. Realistic Group Conflict Theory posits that these conflicts arise from competition for limited resources such as power or prestige [11]. This theory is particularly relevant in the context of political conflicts, in which different groups vie for control over natural resources, territories, and political influence. Competition for these resources often leads to zero-sum thinking, where one group's gain is perceived as another group's loss.

Symbolic Threat Theory adds another layer, suggesting that conflicting value systems and beliefs can also lead to these conflicts and hostilities, as seen in many conflicts between

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[9] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1976).

[10] Thomas Pettigrew, "The Ultimate Attribution Error: Extending Allport's Cognitive Analysis of Prejudice," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 5, no. 4 (1979): 461–76.

[11] Muzafer Sherif and Carolyn Sherif, *Groups in Harmony and Tension* (Harper & Row, 1969).

neighboring states that share the same race and culture but hold different beliefs and ideologies. In the political arena, these threats can manifest as ideological differences, religious tensions, and cultural clashes. For instance, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not only about territorial disputes, but also deeply rooted in differing national narratives and religious significance attributed to the land.

The Social Dominance Theory [12] offers another perspective, suggesting that societies are structured in hierarchical layers, where dominant groups maintain their status through systemic oppression and discrimination against other groups. It posits that dominant groups develop and enforce social, economic, and political systems that privilege their interests while marginalizing other groups. This systemic inequality creates persistent grievances and fuel resistance from oppressed groups, often leading to political unrest and conflicts.

Furthermore, some theories even propose that exclusion from a group represents a realistic threat, impeding access to resources and fulfilling the basic need for belonging [13] . The need for belonging is a fundamental human motivation and exclusion from a group can trigger feelings of insecurity and vulnerability. In political contexts, this exclusion can manifest as discrimination, marginalization, and denial of political representation. Groups that feel excluded from the political process are more likely to resort to radical measures to assert their presence and to secure their rights.

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[12] Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto, *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[13] Baumeister RF and Leary MR, "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation - PubMed," Psychol Bull, 1995, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7777651/ .

Real-World Manifestations of Bias

These biased behaviors, based on group identity, can be observed in many real-world situations. Pager and Quillian's (2009) field experiment reveals a clear racial bias in hiring practices. Applicants with names perceived as belonging to the dominant race (e.g., Emily, Greg) received significantly more job interview callbacks than those with names associated with minority groups, such as Lakisha or Jamal, despite having identical qualifications [14]. Racial bias also taints the criminal justice system, with cases involving white victims, particularly those where the defendant belongs to a minority group, more likely to result in capital punishment[15]. These findings highlight the prevalence of in-group bias and its far-reaching impact across various facets of society.

In addition to employment and criminal justice, in-group bias is evident in political behavior and public opinion. Studies have shown that individuals are more likely to support policies and political candidates that favor their in-group, even if these policies are detrimental to broader society [16] This underscores the contemporary challenge of a political landscape influenced by such biases.

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[14] Devah Pager, Bruce Western, and Bart Bonikowski, "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market," Https://Doi.Org/10.1177/000312240907400505 74, no. 5 (October 1, 2009): 777–99.

[15] Catherine M. Grosso, Jeffrey Fagan, and Michael Laurence, "The Influence of the Race of Defendant and the Race of Victim on Capital Charging and Sentencing in California," Journal of Empirical Legal Studies, 2024, doi:10.1111/JELS.12390.

[16]) Leonie Huddy, "From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory," Political Psychology 22, no. 1 (2001): 127–56.

Therefore, political campaigns often exploit in-group biases to mobilize support. Candidates emphasize shared identities, whether based on ethnicity, religion, or ideology, to appeal to voters' sense of belonging and loyalty to the in-group. This strategic manipulation of in-group sentiments can lead to increased political polarization, as individuals become more entrenched in their group identities and less willing to engage with opposing viewpoints [17].

Applying the Lens of In-Group Bias to the Israeli-Gaza Conflict in 2023

Expanding on the previously established theoretical framework, this paper aims to offer a thorough understanding of why certain countries lend support to others that engage in atrocities against civilians. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict of 2023 serves as a primary example. The explanation will strive to avoid oversimplified reasoning, such as solely attributing support for Israel to a disregard for human rights or prioritizing national interests over human rights, as these explanations, while possibly valid, are inadequate.

To offer a more nuanced perspective, consider the following metaphor: imagine a conflict between two groups and one representing an in-group ("us") and the other representing outsiders ("them"). Initially, an individual's natural response might be to call for an end to the conflict, akin to the ceasefire appeals made by nations, such as the United States, Britain, Germany, and France. However, as the conflict intensifies and poses a perceived threat to the in-group, the individual's inclination shifts towards siding with their in-group, mirroring the actions of Western countries that, despite advocating for a ceasefire, side with their in-group partner Israel. This support or inclination is evident in material assistance, such as defending

[17] Shanto Iyengar, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes, "Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2012): 405–31.

Israel at the United Nations Security Council and the International Court of Justice and supplying weapons used against civilians, even while calling for a ceasefire.

To reconcile this apparent contradiction and alleviate any cognitive dissonance, individuals and nations often embrace narratives that justify their support, thereby avoiding profound conflict with their conscience. For example, some countries have backed Israel's unverified claims regarding the beheading of children on October 7. However, these claims were later debunked by multiple media sources. This example highlights the influence of confirmation bias and attribution error in our case study, shedding light on the complexities of the situation. [18].

In light of the aforementioned, I posit that the backing of Israel's stance, despite its targeting of civilians, can be traced back to the in-group bias of these countries' leaders. This bias strongly influences their actions and decisions, compelling them to support their in-groups, even in the face of substantial ethical and moral challenges. Additionally, I reiterate that this in-group prejudice does not negate the idea of advocating a ceasefire, as all countries should demonstrate such a strong commitment. Nevertheless, in practical applications, these allied nations will continue to provide support and weapons that may contradict their appeal for a ceasefire.

The question that arises is whether Israel should be considered an in-group partner in Western countries, and what indicators support this assumption? Several factors suggest that Israel is affiliated with the western sphere. First, a substantial portion of Israel's population comprises individuals of European descent who possess European nationality. This demographic

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[18] Abigail Gertner, Franklin Zaromb, and Richard D. Roberts, "The Assessment of Biases in Cognition Development and Evaluation of an Assessment Instrument for the Measurement of Cognitive Bias," (2016).

composition establishes a tangible connection between Israel and Western countries, in terms of both ancestral heritage and cultural affinities. Moreover, Israel actively portrays itself as a unique and democratic model within a region characterized by the prevalence of non-democratic states. By upholding democratic principles, Israel aligns itself with Western values and serves as a beacon of Western-style governance in the Middle East; such systems are less prevalent.

Examining specific examples strengthens the argument regarding Israel's alignment with the West. For instance, the United States fosters a demonstrably close relationship with Israel, partly because of the significant Jewish-American population, which acts as a powerful lobby influencing US foreign policy [19]. In other words, there are strong actors who can influence American foreign policies, share religious and cultural ties with Israel, and share the same fear of the future of Israel in this complex and hostile region. This close relationship, which can be considered an in-group relation, was demonstrated in various situations and wars, such as the Six-day War in 1973, and was reiterated by Biden's speech on multiple occasions, including his meeting with Israeli President on July 18, 2023, where he stated:

> 'as I affirmed to Prime Minister Netanyahu yesterday, America's commitment to Israel is firm and it is — it is ironclad. And we're committed, as well, to ensure that — that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon' [20].

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[19] John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

[20] "Remarks by President Biden and President Isaac Herzog of the State of Israel Before Bilateral Meeting," The White House, July 18, 2023, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-

Furthermore, Hamas is more likely to be classified as an out-group, as it is classified as an extremist Islamic group, and America considers these Islamic groups and those who belong to them or are intellectually close to them in ideas such as jihad as outside-group members, certainly for many reasons, one of which is that these groups attacked America on September 11, 2001.

The same holds true for European nations, including Britain, which enjoyed a partnership with Zionists from 1917 to 1930 and was instrumental in the creation of Israel. This can be seen in The Balfour Declaration of November 1917, in which the British government declared its backing for the creation of a Jewish National Home in Palestine [21] . Therefore, Israel can be considered an in-group state for Britain, as it was the primary reason for its establishment. This historical alliance continues to manifest in contemporary geopolitics, as evidenced by the British Prime Minister's recent statements, reaffirming unwavering support and friendship with Israel during the Gaza conflict of 2023. Specifically, in a parliamentary session on October 23, 2023, the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, emphasized Britain's solidarity with Israel in its defense against terrorism, stating:

'In my meetings with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Herzog, I told them once again that we stand resolutely with Israel in defending itself against terror, and I stressed again the need to act in line with international humanitarian law and take

remarks/2023/07/18/remarks-by-president-biden-and-president-isaac-herzog-of-the-state-of-israel-before-bilateral-meeting/ .

[21] Jonathan Spyer, "AN ANALYTICAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BRITISH POLICY TOWARD ISRAEL," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 8, no. 2 (2004).

every possible step to avoid harming civilians. It was a message delivered by a close friend and ally. I say it again: we stand with Israel[22].

As for Germany, it also considers the Israelis to be in-group because of the factors mentioned previously such as the Israeli democratic system and their European origins, with the factor being that the Germans still have the sense of guilt and moral responsibility, which drives their commitment to provide support. This principle is deeply embedded in German politics, as illustrated by current and past chancellor statements and politicians. For instance, former Chancellor Angela Merkel highlighted Germany's enduring commitment to Israel by affirming that Israel's security is a core aspect of Germany's reason for the state during her visit to Israel on October 11, 2021. She stated, 'Israel's safety and security is a key element in Germany's national interests' and added, 'When it comes to the safety and security of Israel, Germany is not neutral' [23]. Such declarations underscore the notion that Germany unequivocally considers Israel part of its in-group. Similarly, the current position of Chancellor Olaf Scholz is reflected in his statement in the Bundestag on October 12, 2023,:

'At this moment, there is only one place for Germany: firmly at the side of Israel. This is what we mean when we say that the security of Israel is and will remain the prime motivation for the actions of the state of Germany', the Federal Chancellor said. 'Our own history, the responsibility we bear as a result of the Holocaust, make

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[22] "Israel and Gaza," Hansard, UK Parliament, October 23, 2023,

https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-23/debates/018D96AB-5D91-48D7-9809-

19A03E54125A/IsraelAndGaza .

[23] "Federal Chancellor Merkel in Israel," October 11, 2021, https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-

en/service/archive/federal-chancellor-israel-visit-1966986 .

it our permanent task to stand up for the existence and security of the state of Israel. This responsibility is our guide' [24].

France has less strong support for Israel's position in this conflict compared to Britain, but Israel is still considered a main ally since France entered the war with Britain to support the Israeli position against Egypt as a common enemy in the 1956 war with Britain and Israel. Characterized by Islamophobia, France has made many decisions regarding political Islam. It experienced many terrorist attacks by extremist Islamic movements; therefore, Hamas, which has Islamic beliefs, can be classified as an outside group for France.

On the other hand, some countries exhibited an in-group bias on October 7 by backing the Hamas movement, which attacked civilians and took hostages from a party, a behavior that is not morally acceptable. Videos of this incident were widely circulated and received support from in-group countries, such as Syria and Iran, either through silence or lack of condemnation, due to their in-group bias. While these countries may rationalize their position that Hamas is a freedom fighter, it is crucial to recognize that any attack on civilians is morally and legally unacceptable, regardless of the perpetrator's motives. Therefore, this bias led them to ignore their humanitarian sensibilities towards civilians who should be excluded from any military conflict, as well as their demands for saving civilians in Gaza.

Hence, the inherent inclination of humans towards in-group bias presents a persistent challenge on the global stage, regardless of whether it is in the Western or Eastern parts of the world. This mental tendency, which frequently operates unconsciously, can ensnare both individuals and nations. The Israeli-Gaza conflict in 2023 serves as a striking illustration of

[24] "Government Statement by the Federal Chancellor on Israel," Federal Government, October 23, 2023, https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/bk-government-statement-israel-2229864 .

this phenomenon. Despite verbal support for peace, the urge to align with one's own group proves to be a strong and often irresistible influence when taking a position.

Humanitarian Impulses and In-Group Bias: A Deeper Look at Global Protests

Turning to another significant aspect of this argument, some individuals might question the applicability of this argument in elucidating the widespread demonstrations in a multitude of countries, calling for an end to the war in Gaza. To commence, let's examine the title bestowed upon these demonstrations, "ceasefire in Gaza." Titles of this nature aim to unify diverse groups by concentrating on a common objective – cessation of hostilities – rather than expressing a definitive stance in the intricate conflict. Participation in such demonstrations signifies a humanitarian impulse, a call for immediate cessation of violence, not necessarily unwavering support for a specific group. Thus, these demonstrations cannot be deemed clear instances of supporting an outside group if the in-group partner breaches human rights.

Additionally, there are demonstrations that explicitly adopt the "us vs. them" mindset, such as those in London and numerous other countries that explicitly declare support for the Israeli position [25]. From this, it is evident that the issue of "us and them and in-group bias" is deeply ingrained at both popular and governmental levels.

Does this imply that all individuals invariably exhibit in-group bias and prioritize ethnic, cultural, and religious affiliations over moral values? The answer is unequivocally no. It is crucial to note that, although in-group bias is common, there are significant exceptions.

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[25] Matt Mathers, "Thousands Take to Central London for Demonstration 'in Solidarity with Israel' | The Independent," Independent, 2024, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/stand-with-israel-demonstration-london-b2478468.html .

Throughout history and across societies, a minority of individuals upheld moral values over affiliations, such as race, religion, or culture. Numerous examples illustrate this point; for instance, prominent Jewish intellectuals openly criticized Israel's policies and violations of human rights, demonstrating a commitment to ethical standards that surpassed group identity [26]. Additionally, many religious Jews in the West and within Israel have protested against the war and the killing of civilians in Gaza in 2023. Therefore, it is crucial to differentiate between the State of Israel—a civil institution that, despite its Jewish majority, is capable of making mistakes—and the Jewish people and Judaism as a revered and divine faith that embodies a rich tradition of ethical thought.

Mitigating In-Group Bias: Strategies and Solutions

Ultimately, recognizing that present-day individuals are inclined towards in-group bias does not mean that it is an irreversible phenomenon. Human behaviors are subject to transformation and growth, as evidenced by historical instances in which biases based on race, color, and religion have been significantly altered and resolved. The struggles of the black people in America and South Africa, as well as the reconciliation efforts following tribal conflicts in Rwanda, illustrate the potential for overcoming deeply ingrained prejudices. Recent studies have underscored this by discussing the malleability of prejudice and the various factors that can alter biased attitudes. Furthermore, from a young age, individuals' behaviors are shaped and developed through socialization in institutions, such as the family and school, highlighting the potential for change through early intervention [27]. This evidence

[26] Anne Karpf, Brian Klug, Jacqueline Rose, et al., A Time to Speak Out: Independent Jewish Voices on Israel, Zionism and Jewish Identity (London: Verso, 2009),

https://books.google.com.eg/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ZVucEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT6&dq=+Jewish+Voices+for+Peace:+Dissent+in+the+Israeli-Palestinian+Conflict.&ots=hOOvOc2h3-&sig=IWGOXbBdweN1dtJRIF1kAlN51lU&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false .

[27] Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (Prentice Hall, 1977).

supports the idea that in-group biases can indeed be addressed and transformed through concerted efforts.

In particular, contact theory [28] suggests that under specific conditions, direct interaction between members of different social groups can effectively reduce prejudice and bias. These conditions include having equal status among groups, sharing common goals, and fostering cooperation. The success of such intergroup contact is enhanced by support from authorities and the presence of superordinate goals, which necessitate cooperation and can mitigate conflicts by fostering alliances. Additionally, education that promotes cultural awareness and challenges prejudices can significantly reduce bias. Implementing institutional policies that ensure fairness and inclusivity is vital for addressing systemic bias. Encouraging empathy and perspective-taking can further reduce prejudice by helping individuals to understand and relate to others' experiences [29]. Finally, creating situations of intergroup cooperation and positive interdependence, where groups rely on each other for mutual success, can break down barriers and foster cooperative behavior [30].

Regarding the political sphere and international issues that we bring up, I would contend that the most crucial solution lies in raising awareness and conducting research to address and counteract in-group bias. Despite numerous human rights charters and agreements designed to protect civilians, in-group bias persists. It is imperative to candidly address this bias through scholarly research - as this paper does - and public discourse to ensure that humanity does not continue to fall into the trap of group-based prejudice.

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[28] G. W Allport, "The Nature of Prejudice," in *Addison-Wesley* (Addison-Wesley, 1954), 28–46.

[29] Adam Galinsky, Gillian Ku, and Cynthia Wang, "Perspective-Taking and Self-Other Overlap: Fostering Social Bonds and Facilitating Social Coordination," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 2008, 185–208.

[30] David Johnson and Roger Johnson, "An Educational Psychology Success Story: Social Interdependence Theory and Cooperative Learning," *Educational Researcher*, 2009, 365–79.

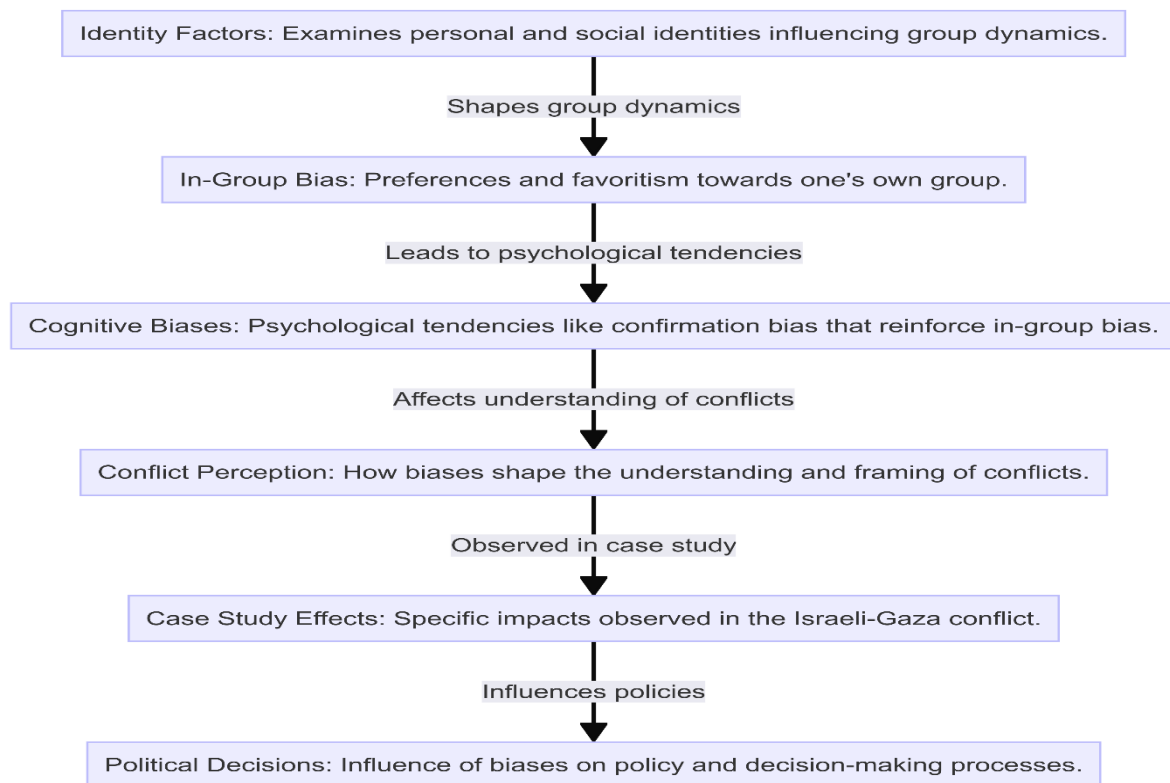# Conceptual Model of In-Group Bias and Conflict Dynamics

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of In-Group Bias and Political Decision-Making in Conflict Situations

The conceptual model presented here illustrates the intricate relationships between identity factors, in-group bias, cognitive biases, conflict perception, case study effects, and political decisions within the context of the Israeli-Gaza conflict. It begins with Identity Factors that examine the personal and social identities influencing group dynamics, such as national and religious identities. These factors lead to In-Group Bias, characterized by preferences and favoritism towards one's own group, which, in turn, shapes Conflict Perception.

Cognitive Biases, such as confirmation bias and fundamental attribution error, moderate the relationship between in-group bias and conflict perception, further entrenching partisan viewpoints. This model then highlights the Case Study Effects, specifically the impacts

observed in the Israeli-Gaza conflict, demonstrating how in-group bias, exacerbated by cognitive biases, impacts real-world outcomes and influences Political Decisions.

By providing a visual summary, this model aids in understanding the complex interplay between identity, bias, conflict, and the case study emphasizing the importance of addressing these factors in political psychology research and practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper underscores the critical importance of understanding in-group bias in shaping political behavior and international conflicts, particularly within the context of the Israeli-Gaza conflict. The objective is not to endorse either side, Gaza or Israel, but to highlight the inherent dangers of in-group bias. Group affiliation is a fundamental aspect of human existence that is crucial for survival and development, as seen in familial and communal structures. However, the need for belonging also has negative dimensions, particularly in its impact on attitudes and decision-making processes.

Therefore, modern societies must work towards mitigating the polarization between "us" and "them." This involves educating future generations about the necessity of limiting group allegiance when it conflicts with overarching moral values. Moral principles should take precedence over racial, cultural, or religious considerations. The goal is not to abolish the human inclination towards group affiliation, as it is vital for survival, but to critically evaluate and regulate this behavior to prevent its detrimental effects.

Examining the Israeli-Gaza conflict through the lens of Social Identity Theory reveals the profound influence of in-group bias on state behavior. The continued support of Israel by Western nations despite significant ethical dilemmas underscores the pervasive nature of this

bias. This phenomenon extends beyond this conflict to broader social and political contexts, and addressing these biases is essential for fostering more equitable and humane global interactions.

Addressing these in-group biases requires a multifaceted strategy that includes educational reforms, policy changes, and promotion of intergroup dialogue. Future research should explore the specific conditions that can mitigate in-group bias in the political sphere and develop practical measures to foster inclusive political identities. By addressing these issues, we can create more effective frameworks to reduce bias and enhance cooperation in international politics.

Our analysis demonstrates that in-group bias is not merely a psychological phenomenon but rather a crucial factor in political decision-making and international relations. The unwavering support from countries such as the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany for Israel, despite evidence of civilian casualties, exemplifies how deeply national leaders are influenced by in-group affiliations and perceived threats. Our analysis also reveals that simplistic explanations of these actions based on national interest or disregard for human rights are incomplete and fail to capture the complex nuances of the situation. Understanding these dynamics is indispensable for political theorists and policymakers to foster just and impartial political environments.