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Democratic Values and the Microfoundations of Arab Support for Peace with Israel

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Abstract: The Arab Spring and the short-lived political ascendancy of Islamist movements reignited the debate about what greater popular participation in foreign policy decision-making would entail for the prospects of peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Building on the developing body of individual-level investigations into the Democratic Peace thesis and contributing to the wider debate about the relationship between peace and democracy in the Middle East, this paper utilizes 2010-11 Arab Barometer data to establish the determinants of public support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict across the Arab world. The results reveal that emancipative political values such as support for gender equality and secularism help predict greater support for peace with Israel. These findings demonstrate that contrary to the claims of skeptics, democratization and peace can reinforce each other in the Arab world.

Keywords: democracy, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, public opinion, gender equality, Islamism, secularism, Arab Spring

Word count: 10223

Introduction

The Arab Spring and the short-lived political ascendancy of Islamist movements reignited the debate about what greater popular participation in foreign policy decision-making would entail for the willingness of Arab governments to endorse a two-state solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and the long-term stability of any agreement in light of possible public opposition. In answering this question, this paper makes several major contributions. First, it offers generalizable findings on the main drivers of Arab support for peace with Israel which build and expand upon previous research that assessed the impact of economic concerns (Astorino-Courtois, 1996; Friedman, 2005; Khashan, 2000; Nachtwey and Tessler, 2002), the private and public dimensions of religion (Haddad, 2002; Mi'ari, 1999; Shamir and Shikaki, 2002; Tessler and Nachtwey 1998; Tessler and Nachtwey 1999), gender and attitudes on gender equality (Tessler, Nachtwey and Grant, 1999; Tessler and Warriner, 1997) as well as support for democratic governance (Sahliyah and Deng 2003) on Arab public opinion toward international conflict. In the process, this paper adds, secondly, a rare investigation of non-Western publics to the growing body of individual-level explorations of democratic peace (Inglehart, Puranen and Welzel, 2015; Johns and Davies, 2012; Lacina and Lee, 2013; Tomz and Weeks, 2013). This paper is thus not so much interested in explaining how peace or even just the avoidance of interstate disputes is achieved at the level of governments, but whether or not it is possible to identify the socio-economic and attitudinal drivers of the wider public acceptance of peace agreements. In highlighting the link between support for secularism and gender equality, which are both crucial to a robust democratic political culture (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2002), and support for peace this paper not only demonstrates the applicability of the micro-foundations of the democratic peace to the hard case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but also shows that democratization and peace can be mutually reinforcing in the Middle East.

This article proceeds as follows. The next section discusses the role of public opinion as a driver and measure of 'warm' peace. The following section develops hypotheses about the main determinants of Arab public opinion toward peace with Israel. A review of the benefits and limitations of the present data set then leads into the presentation and discussion of pooled and country-level logistic regression analyses. The final section lays out the theoretical and policy implications of this article's findings.

Public Opinion and Peace

The crucial role which public support plays in bringing about conflict transformation from a mere absence of war to 'warm peace' has long been recognized. Miller (2000) and Ripsman (2005) argue that while Realist factors such as a great power concert or stabilizing hegemony might be able to produce 'cold peace', where the return to violence is still possible if the international environment changes or revisionist groups come to power, 'warm peace', where war is 'unthinkable', can only be achieved in the context of economic cooperation and political liberalization. This view rests on the assumption that this type of conflict transformation requires the expansion of the number of actors benefitting from peace beyond the confines of the immediate supporters of the government which concluded the peace (Astorino-Courtois, 2000; Press-Barnathan, 2006). As 'statist settlements without societal buy-in' (Ripsman 2011-12: 433), the only two peace treaties which Israel concluded so far were met with at best lukewarm support from the Egyptian and Jordanian publics who lamented the lack of significant 'peace dividends' (Press-Barnathan, 2006; Scham and Lucas, 2003). US military and economic assistance only benefited the supporters of authoritarian rule in both countries (Berger 2012; Brand, 1999; Henry and Springborg, 2011; Karawan, 1994; Lucas, 2003; Yom, 2009).

This pattern is not surprising in light of David's conclusion (1991) that foreign policy alignments in the developing world are directly related to the leader's calculus about which foreign partner is most likely to ensure their domestic survival in power. Political leaders thus make alignment decisions not in the best interest of the wider public, but in their own best interests. As Barnett and Levy (1991) have shown, external alignments of which peace treaties constitute a prominent example, do not only help face external threats in the face of limited internal sources or vested political interests, but also provide material resources that can be used to counter domestic threats to the regime.

The Egyptian and Jordanian cases therefore clearly illustrate how the failure to utilize peace agreements for a drive toward political reform makes it more difficult for societies to fully embrace peace. In light of the strong positive impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on political repression in the region (Lebovic and Thompson, 2006), peace agreements could set the stage for democratization, which, if successful, reinforces cooperation and trust to the extent that 'warm peace' is achieved (Miller, 2000). Irrespective of the post-Arab Spring state of Arab democracy, such hypothetical virtuous cycles of peace and democratization could address the political inertia which rests on the 'deep-seated view of many Israelis that the Middle East is fundamentally hostile to their state' (Barak, 2010: 181). It would thus become clear that the argument made by politicians on Israel's

political right that the country had no option other than to pursue Ze'ev Jabotinsky's uncompromising 'Iron Wall' policy (Jones and Milton-Edwards, 2013) was not more than a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is in this context that the crucial role of public opinion becomes evident, as it constitutes not just a central facilitator of or impediment to reconciliation, but also a means to track it (Shamir and Shikaki, 2002).

Theory and Hypotheses

The general contours of the debate over a possible trade-off between peace and democracy in the Middle East can be traced back at least to the early 1990s when the Oslo peace process coincided with increased academic attention to the prospects of political reform in the Arab world. Sela (2005), for instance, referenced Arab critics of authoritarianism in the region who complained that regimes deliberately preserved the conflict in order to avoid liberalization. Khashan (2000: 9, endnote 14) suggested that focusing on evaluations of local governments is important since 'those holding negative perceptions about their ruling elite are unlikely to endorse their leaders' signature to peace treaties.' In one of the very few previous tests of competing claims about the role of democratic aspirations in facilitating support for peace in the Middle East Sahliyah and Deng (2003) showed that perceptions of democracy did correlate with support for peace with Israel among Palestinians. They thus concluded that the 'consolidation of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law among Palestinians would increase the likelihood of support of the peace process (Sahliyah and Deng, 2003: 705).'

In light of the ethnic and religious differences between Israel and its Arab neighbors, this investigation into Arab views on peace with Israel constitutes a particularly difficult test for the impact of shared democracy on the likelihood of conflict across cultures. Any finding that would show Arab democrats as being inclined to entertain peace with a fellow democracy such as Israel would run counter to Huntington's (1996) claim about the centrality of cultural variables. Such a finding would, however, be in line with large-n, cross-country assessments of the 'clash of civilizations' thesis. Russett, Oneal, and Cox (2000) showed that civilizational differences add little explanatory power when compared with realist influences such as contiguity, alliances, or relative power as well as liberal influences such as joint democracy and economic interdependence. Similarly, Chiozza (2002) found that shared democracy still made a positive, albeit slightly weaker, contribution towards peaceful relations across civilizations. As Henderson (1998: 481) summed it up:

‘(d)emocracies are less violent because they are democracies and not because they are religiously similar.’

On the other hand, Regan and Leng (2003) showed that cultural similarities, such as those between countries who share either an ‘individualist’ or ‘collectivist’ culture or the same religion, reduce the likelihood of involvement in militarized interstate disputes and increase the chances of successful negotiations in the event of such disputes. Recent individual-level tests suggest that cultural differences also determine whether Western publics perceive another country as a threat. Lacina and Lee (2013) found that U.S. respondents did not view Muslim democracies as significantly more trustworthy than Muslim non-democracies. Davies and Johns (2012) showed that U.S. and British respondents were more likely to endorse force against Muslim majority countries than against Christian majority countries, irrespective of their political system and that respondents were even more likely to support force against Muslim democracies than against Christian dictatorships. If, under these conditions, it could be shown that Arab (Muslim) democrats are more likely to support peace with a democracy set up specifically as the home of a people who do not share their religion, then this would represent very strong further support for the democratic peace thesis. The first hypothesis thus is:

Hypothesis I - Respondents with more positive views of democracy are more likely to support peace with Israel.

As mentioned above, the international community and particularly the United States have long been concerned about the impact which democratization might have on Israel’s peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt because of the associated rise of Islamist parties (Alterman, 2005; Yom, 2009). Israeli political and military elites warned Western observers not to view the anti-government protests sweeping the region in early 2011 through the lens of ‘Berlin 1989’, but rather through the lens of ‘Tehran 1979’ (Jones and Milton-Edwards, 2013; Magen, 2015). Statements by leading Islamist politicians have not been helpful in this regard. In response to Saudi Arabia’s 2003 Arab Peace Initiative discussed below, Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah demanded that Arab countries provide Palestinians with weapons rather than search for peace with Israel (quoted in Maddy-Weitzman 2010: 7). In October 2012, at a time when the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, via its affiliated Freedom and Justice Party, controlled the Egyptian parliament and presidency, its Supreme Guide, Mohammad Badie, called for ‘Jihad to liberate Jerusalem from the Israeli occupation’ (quoted in Magen 2015: 119). Such statements might indeed reflect the views of their supporters. Tessler and Nachtwey (1998) showed, for instance, that Islamism, measured as support for a greater role of

religion in government, was linked with unfavorable attitudes toward a peaceful conclusion of the Arab-Israeli conflict among Egyptians, Kuwaitis, and Palestinians. Mi'ari (1999), Shamir and Shikaki (2002) as well as Sahliyeh and Deng (2003) showed that, among Palestinians, Fatah supporters were more likely to support the peace process or cultural normalization with Israel than supporters of Islamist organizations. The second hypothesis thus is:

Hypothesis II - Respondents with more positive views of secularism are more likely to support peace with Israel.

Another body of research on the interaction between conflict and political norms (Maoz and Russett, 1993) has sought to examine the role which gender and attitudes to gender equality play (for overviews, see Caprioli, 2000; Conover and Shapiro, 1993; Regan and Paskeviciute, 2003; Tessler and Warriner, 1997). While Tessler and Warriner (1997) could not detect any evidence of gender differences per se, they did find that in all four publics under consideration (Israel, Egypt, Palestine, and Kuwait), supporters of equality between women and men were more supportive of diplomatic efforts to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. They thus concluded that attitudes toward peace and gender equality are part of a comprehensive worldview which includes a willingness to challenge 'traditional and established ideas about right and wrong' and the 'notion that existing conflicts and differences are inescapable (Tessler and Warriner 1997: 276).' Inglehart, Puranen, and Welzel (2015) drew a similar conclusion from their large-n, cross-country analysis which showed that, as publics across the world became more supportive of gender equality and sexual liberation, they also became less willing to accept the human costs of war. Caprioli (2000) found that a higher share of women in parliament, longer duration of female suffrage, a higher share of women in the labor force, and a lower fertility rate were linked with a country's more peaceful behavior at the international level. Similarly, Regan and Paskeviciute (2003) demonstrated that increased participation of women in the political process, as measured in the share of women in parliament, decreases the odds of a country being involved in a militarized dispute. The third hypothesis thus is:

Hypothesis III - Respondents who support gender equality are more likely to support peace with Israel.

Data and Method

The data utilized in the following analysis was gathered in face-to-face interviews by the Arab Barometer consortium and its local partners between November 2010 and October 2011. The survey represents a national probability sample design of adults 18 years and older.

The data offers a number of advantages over previous examinations of public support for peace in the Middle East. First, it is broadly representative in terms of crucial socio-demographic variables such as gender, education, income, and urbanity. This contrasts, for instance, with Khashan's study (2000) of a non-representative quota sample of 1,600 respondents (equally divided among Lebanese, Jordanians, Palestinians, and Syrians) collected via a 'controlled snowball' method or the exclusively urban samples utilized by Furia and Lucas (2006). Second, its unrivalled scope covers ten countries which are home to three quarters of the Arab world's total population. These countries have very different relations with Israel ranging from the ups and downs of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the relatively stable peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, the tensions and conflict with Lebanon and Iraq, to the more distant relations with North and East African countries such as Algeria, Tunisia, and Sudan. Most importantly, the data offers a rare insight into public opinion on peace with Israel within Saudi Arabia, a country which has played a central role in regional crisis diplomacy over the last decades and is seen as able to lend crucial political and religious legitimacy to any agreement which Israelis and Palestinians might reach over controversial issues such as refugees and the status of Jerusalem (Guzansky, 2015). The detection of consistent attitudinal patterns across such a diverse set of countries would tremendously improve confidence in the generalizability of findings. Third, with a single questionnaire being administered across all countries, the results are more directly comparable as was the case in earlier studies which compared results from different surveys (Tessler and Warriner, 1997; Tessler and Nachtwey, 1998). Finally, its unrivalled thematic breadth allows the in-depth investigation of a range of potentially competing claims about the drivers of Arab support for peace outlined above.

At the same time, a number of limitations have to be kept in mind when assessing the results of the following regression analyses. The literature suggests three reasons why Arab democrats might object to peace with Israel which the present data set cannot control for. First, Arab publics might disagree with Israel's classification as a democracy which enjoys a Polity IV score of 10 (Marshall, 2014) and a Freedom House (2016) score of '1' for political rights and '2' for civil liberties. This is because Israel's version of an 'ethnic democracy' (Smootha, 1997) imposes restrictions on the civil rights of Israeli Arabs, disadvantages them in the allocation of public resources and continues to

occupy Palestinian territories. Indeed, as Furia and Lucas' (2006: 602) analysis has shown, Arab publics' views of other countries do not just correspond with how the other side behaves toward their own country, but also with how this country behaves on general regional issues and towards 'persons who are not their compatriots'.

A second reason might be perceptions of threat. Tomz and Weeks' (2013) analysis of US and UK public opinion has shown that respondents are less likely to support military action against a democracy because of a lower sense of threat. Indeed, Democratic Peace theory rests on the assumption that democracies prefer to settle disputes via negotiation and compromise (Regan and Leng, 2003; Ripsman, 2005). Israel has, however, often relied on offensive military action as a central part of its national security strategy either because of bureaucratic inertia or the political dominance of the military (Maoz, 2007) or even the political system itself which favors short-term (symbolic) measures over long-term strategies (Freilich, 2006). Unfortunately, the present data does not allow the direct investigation of either of these two possible determinants of Arab support for peace with Israel. In response to this challenge it can be pointed out that this is a problem which this analysis shares with all previous individual-level assessments of Arab public opinion. In addition, if findings of studies conducted before the last decade of conflict could be replicated with data collected in 2010 and 2011, then this would further increase confidence in the existence of clearly identifiable drivers of Arab public opinion towards peace with Israel.

Thirdly, the present data set does not allow testing the impact of skepticism regarding Israel's acceptance of the proposal for a two-state solution captured in the dependent variable. Telhami and Kull (2013:13), for instance, showed that among Palestinians support for a comprehensive peace deal similar to the one outlined in this analysis's dependent variable increases from 41 percent (i.e. exactly the same figure as the Arab Barometer result reported in table 1) to 59 percent if they could be sure that the Israeli side would accept as well. Fourthly, this study can also not control for expectations of success. As Shamir and Shikaki (2002) have shown in the case of Israeli and Palestinian public opinion, expectations about its possible success play an important role in shaping support for a peace agreement. In short, the present analysis captures the 'committed' supporters of peace who favour peace irrespective of the specifics of the current political context and the agreement's chances of acceptance or implementation by the other side. These 'committed' supporters of peace are likely to be the engines of 'warm peace'.

Dependent Variable

The breakdown of the Oslo peace process, as well as the regional upheaval caused by the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the US-led war in Iraq served as background to a number of attempts to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The so-called Arab Peace Initiative which was launched by then-Crown Prince and later King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia in late 2002 and endorsed by the 22 member states of the Arab League and the 57 member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation was designed to specifically address the aforementioned Israeli skepticism regarding the Arab world's willingness to accept Israel's right to exist (Podeh, 2014). While the initial Abdullah plan had offered Israel full political, economic and cultural normalization, Syrian and Lebanese intransigence meant that the final version only offered 'normal relations' (Guzansky, 2015; Maddy-Weitzman, 2010).

The proposal encapsulated in the dependent variable goes one step further. It specifically reflects recent Israeli-Palestinian attempts to bridge the gap on issues such as Israel's Jewish identity, the status of Jerusalem, and the Palestinians' right of return which have been shown to be the most controversial on both sides (Shamir and Shikaki, 2005; Telhami and Kull, 2013). The first proposal, called 'The People's Voice', was drafted in July 2002 by Sari Nusseibeh, President of Al-Quds University in Jerusalem, and Ami Ayalon, former Knesset member for Labour and previous head of Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security agency. The second proposal, the 2003 Geneva Accord, was drafted by, among others, Yossi Beilin, one of Israel's main architects of the Oslo peace process, and Yasser Abed Rabbo, former leader of the left-wing DFLP faction and confidant of both Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas. Both initiatives sought to reconcile Palestinian demands for the recognition of the Palestinian refugees' right of return with Israeli concerns about what the full implementation of such right would mean for the future of their country. The result was the exchange of an Israeli pledge to allow limited relocation of Palestinian refugees into Israel as well as compensation and support for resettlement elsewhere with the explicit Palestinian recognition of Israel as the home of the Jewish people (Shamir and Shikaki, 2005). Reflecting the wording of these proposals, the dependent variable captures responses to the following question:

There is a proposal that after the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and a permanent solution to all of the problems in the conflict with Israel, including Jerusalem and the refugees, that there should be mutual recognition of Israel as a state for the Jewish people and Palestine as a state for the Palestinian people. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

As the question deals specifically with an agreement between the Israeli and Palestinian people, it cannot offer direct evidence about Arab public support for the mutual recognition of their own governments and Israel envisioned in the aforementioned Arab Peace Initiative. Rather, the question reveals the level of support for the comprehensive concessions the Israeli and Palestinian side must accept, including the particularly contentious issue of national identities. While it has been established that some form of recognition of Israel as the home of the Jewish people will not constitute an insurmountable obstacle to a final peace package (Telhami and Kull, 2013), table 1 underscores the unease amongst Arab publics on this issue. Egypt is the only country examined here where an outright majority in favor of the two-state solution under the conditions spelled out in the dependent variable exists. On the other hand, there are only four countries (Algeria, Jordan, Palestine, and Sudan) with an outright majority against this version of a two-state solution. The strong rejection of the proposal among the Algerian public appears to reflect the generally more skeptical attitude toward Israel among Algerian leaders who equated their country's struggle against France with the Palestinian struggle against Israel (Abadi, 2002).

Table 1 – Support for Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Arab Barometer 2010/11 (%)

	ALG	EGY	IRQ	JOR	LEB	PAL	SAU	SUD	TUN	YEM
Definitely agree	3.7	14.9	8.6	6.9	23.6	8.1	11.4	15.2	12.8	6.3
Agree	8.1	43.5	30.6	22.5	17.5	33.7	19.6	19.9	26.5	21.7
Disagree	34.7	19.9	28.5	27.5	15.2	35.4	22.5	26.0	21.2	34.2
Definitely disagree	36.4	14.1	18.9	29.3	34.1	19.6	25.0	29.8	20.9	22.9
Missing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.1	1.0
Don't Know	15.3	7.6	9.6	11.9	7.8	2.2	18.4	5.9	18.1	12.5
Declined	1.9	0.0	3.8	1.9	1.9	0.2	3.1	3.2	0.5	1.3
N	1215	1218	1233	1189	1388	1197	1403	1538	1196	1206

A test of parallel lines confirmed that ordinal regression is not appropriate as the slope coefficients are not the same across response categories. With one possible alternative, multinomial logistic regression, facing the problem of empty cells, the following analysis employs a binary logistic regression model with a dependent variable comparing all those who favor this solution (coded '1') with those who oppose it ('0') and non-responses excluded from the analyses.

Independent Variables

In order to test hypothesis I, the following analyses include an index variable which combines support for the statement “democracy might have problems, yet is better than other systems” and approval of “a democratic political system which guarantees public freedoms, equality in political and civil rights, alternation of power, and accountability and transparency of the executive authority” (see Ciftci, 2010; Jamal, 2007 for a similar operationalization). Answers were recoded and combined so that higher scores indicate stronger preference for democracy as a political system (tables I and II, supplementary file). The broad support which democracy as a political system enjoyed at the time of the survey in 2010/11 was not just an effect of the early enthusiasm of the Arab Spring, but is very much in line with empirical evidence collected and analyzed before (Tessler and Gao, 2005; Tessler, Jamal and Robbins, 2012).

Following Ciftci (2013), Tessler, Jamal, and Robbins (2012), as well as Tessler and Gao (2005), this analysis utilizes approval of a greater public role for religious elites and of their greater influence over government decisions as an instrument of testing hypothesis II about the impact of views on secularism (tables III and IV, supplementary file). Responses were recoded and combined so that higher scores indicate support for a reduced role of religion in politics (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .723$).

Hypothesis III on the impact of support for gender equality is tested via an index variable measuring support for female ministers and female heads of government (tables V and VI, supplementary file, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .716$). The following analyses also control for the impact of age, gender, Christian faith, socio-economic status as measured in the ability to cover daily expenses (table IX, supplementary file), perceptions of the country’s overall economic performance (table X, supplementary file) and religiosity. Following Nachtwey and Tessler (2002), religiosity is measured via an index variable indicating personal interest in religion as exemplified in the frequency of reading religious books and attendance at religious lessons (tables VII and VIII, supplementary file, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .716$).

Analysis

The results in table 2 show that, contrary to hypothesis I, there is no correlation between general approval of democracy and support for peace with Israel among Arab publics. The strong support for hypotheses II and III suggests, however, that this finding should not be seen as evidence against a link between a commitment to democracy and peace. This is because Inglehart (2003) and Welzel

(2007) demonstrated that generic measures of support for democracy such as those employed here as a test of hypothesis I can be misleading due to the universality of overt ‘lip service’ to this concept. Indeed, in the political context in which this analysis’ underlying data was collected, generic support for democracy could represent more of a rejection of the political status quo rather than a genuine commitment to democracy.

In line with hypothesis II, respondents who want to limit the political role of religion are more likely to support peace with Israel. In other words, in line with earlier findings (Sahliye and Deng, 2003; Mi’ari, 1999) there is considerable empirical evidence supporting skeptical views on impact of Islamism on support for an Arab-Israeli peace. Confirming hypothesis III, Arab men and women who support equal political rights for women are all more likely to endorse proposals for a two-state solution set forth by members of Israeli and Palestinian civil society. This is of particular significance for any discussion of the link between democracy and peace in the Middle East, since Inglehart and Norris (2003) demonstrated that a genuine commitment to democracy is likely to be found among supporters of gender equality, which constitutes the most robust manifestation of the principles of tolerance and egalitarianism which make democracy sustainable. The disappearance of the significant impact of female gender on attitudes toward peace in model 3 (table 2) highlights the existence of a strong gender cleavage regarding the support for gender equality in the Arab world. In line with Tessler and Warriner’s (1997) earlier finding, it is support for political gender equality, not gender itself, which makes people more likely to support peace. It is thus evident that Arab attitudes towards Israel are not exempt from the link between feminist and pacifist attitudes which Inglehart, Puranen, and Welzel (2015) established at a global level. Indeed, apart from the strong impact of the variable capturing Christian respondents discussed below, views on secularism and gender equality exert the greatest substantive influence on support for peace. These findings are confirmed in a robustness test which took into account respondents who were unable to offer a view on democracy, secularism, and feminism. When supporters of democracy, secularism, and feminism (all coded ‘1’) were compared via respective dummy variables with opponents of these concepts as well as respondents unable to offer a view (both coded ‘0’), the overall pattern still holds. Only education ceases to be significant with all other variables maintaining their significance (supplementary file, table XI).

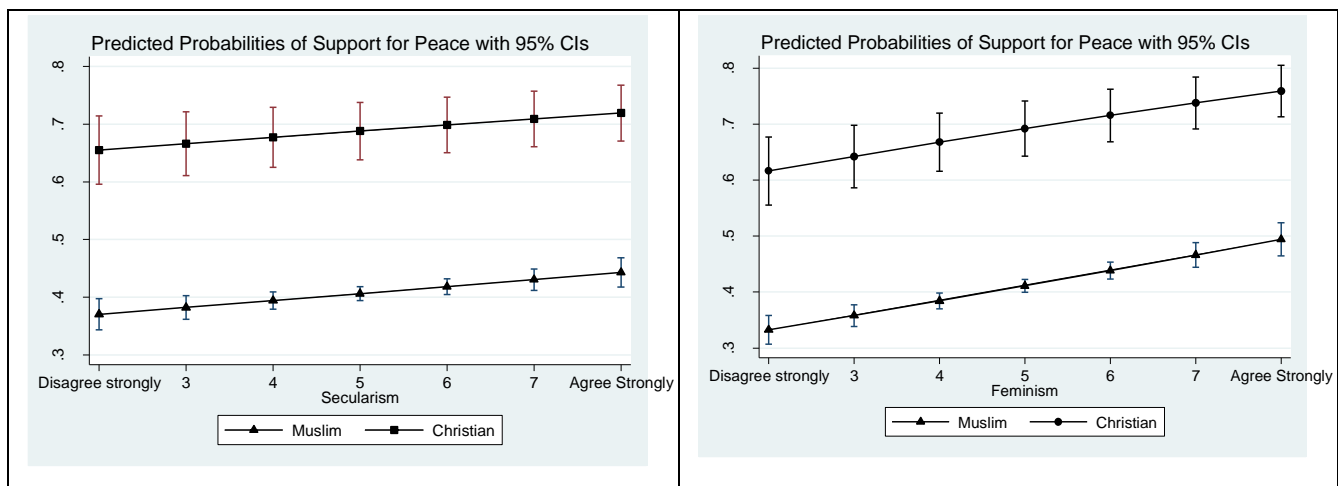
Table 2 – Determinants of Arab support for peace with Israel
(Arab Barometer, 2010-11, pooled analysis)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	B	B	B
	S.E.	S.E.	S.E.
Support for Democracy	-.015 (.020)	-.025 (.021)	-.040 (.021)
Support for Secularism		.068*** (.016)	.053** (.016)
Support for Feminism			.120*** (.017)
Women	.097* (.046)	.103* (.046)	.033 (.047)
Christian	1.367*** (.110)	1.320*** (.110)	1.248*** (.111)
Age	.002** (.001)	.002** (.001)	.002** (.001)
Education	-.038 (.020)	-.044* (.020)	-.049* (.020)
Income	.063* (.026)	.066* (.026)	.066* (.026)
Economic Situation in Country	.048 (.029)	.057 (.029)	.059 (.029)
Religiosity	-.008 (.013)	.001 (.013)	.003 (.013)
Algeria	-1.391*** (.139)	-1.440*** (.139)	-1.488*** (.140)
Egypt	.840*** (.109)	.837*** (.109)	.916*** (.110)
Iraq	.069 (.105)	.102 (.106)	.067 (.106)
Jordan	-.393*** (.109)	-.395*** (.109)	-.418*** (.109)
Lebanon	-.379** (.119)	-.488*** (.122)	-.632*** (.124)
Palestine	-.008 (.104)	-.013 (.104)	-.031 (.104)
Sudan	-.052 (.102)	-.011 (.102)	-.050 (.103)
Tunisia	.345** (.111)	.311** (.112)	.282* (.112)
Yemen	-.122 (.114)	-.097 (.114)	-.126 (.115)
Constant	-.403* (.202)	-.721** (.216)	-1.069*** (.222)
Chi	606.521***	624.820***	674.360***
Cox/Nagelkerke	.069/.093	.071/.096	.077/.103
% predicted	62.1	62.1	62.5
N	8487	8487	8487

Significance * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001, Saudi Arabia is reference category

This impact becomes even more transparent when we calculate the change in the predicted probability of endorsing peace when support for secularism and feminism are moved from their minimum to the maximum values with other variables held at their respective mean or median. For a Muslim respondent, the move from strong disagreement to strong agreement with the notion of female ministers and female heads of governments is associated with an increase of the probability of endorsing peace with Israel from 33.3 percent to 49.4 percent. For Christian respondents, the probability of support for peace increases from 61.6 percent to 75.9 percent. A similar, yet weaker, pattern emerges with regard to secularism. The probability of Muslim (44.3%) and Christian (71.9%) supporters of secularism endorsing peace with Israel is higher than for Muslim (37.0%) and Christian (65.5%) opponents of secularism (figure 1).

Figure 1



All of this confirms Tessler and Nachtwey's (1999: 36) earlier argument that support for secularism and gender equality are part of a shared normative outlook:

There are men and women who desire a broad ideological and cultural revolution, one involving the privatization of religion and a departure from traditional values and behavior patterns, and, apparently, these Palestinians consider peace with Israel an important part of the normative transformation they favor.

The present analysis shows that this logic also applies to the Arab world as a whole.

The country-level analyses presented in table 3 offer an additional, more conservative, test of the hypothesized impact of democratic norms. The variable parameters are also more straightforward in their interpretation than would be the case with country interactions in a pooled model. In addition,

country-level models offer the advantage of assessing more directly country-level specifics such as differences between Palestinians and East Bankers in Jordan as well as between Sunnis and Shiites in Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

In line with the findings of the pooled model, there is no support for hypothesis I as there is not a single country where a positive correlation between support for democracy and support for peace exists. In Egypt, Jordan and Sudan the correlation between support for democracy and support for peace is even negative. In Egypt, this significance depends on the inclusion of support for gender equality. It is noteworthy that, Sudan aside, the negative impact of support for democracy on support for peace with Israel is limited to the only two countries which share an authoritarian secular regime and a peace treaty with Israel. There thus exists evidence that for a considerable number of Jordanians and Egyptians the rejection of peace with Israel is part of the rejection of the domestic authoritarian status quo.

In line with hypothesis II, support for secularism is significantly correlated with more positive views toward peace in Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan. In two additional countries, secularism narrowly fails to reach conventional levels of significance due to its correlation with other variables. In Tunisia, where Islamist groups played a prominent role in anti-normalization campaigns (Petrucci and Fois 2016), the strong negative impact of religiosity washes out the slightly less powerful, positive impact of secularism on support for peace with Israel. In Lebanon, secularism emerges as significant if support for democracy is not controlled for. This reflects the strong overlap between support for secularism and democracy in this country. Together, these findings provide further empirical evidence for the continued relevance for the much analyzed fault line between secular supporters of compromise with Israel and Islamist rejectionists (Sahliye and Deng, 2003; Mi'ari, 1999; Tessler and Nachtwey, 1998; Tessler and Nachtwey, 1999). The almost significant, negative impact of secularism in Algeria could reflect the aforementioned historical hostility of the secular FLN toward Israel (Abadi, 2002). In Iraq, of course, Saddam Hussein had invested considerable efforts into presenting himself and his secular regime as leader of the anti-Israel front after Egypt's peace with Israel in 1979 (Brands, 2011).

Table 3 - Determinants of Arab support for peace with Israel (country analyses)

	Algeria		Egypt		Iraq	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Support for Democracy	.075	.113	-.158*	.077	-.038	.075
Support for Secularism	-.157	.089	.046	.049	-.300***	.054
Support for Feminism	.003	.083	.166***	.055	.185**	.064
Women	.100	.245	.208	.162	-.171	.151
Christian			.788	.415		
Shia					-1.069***	.175
Kurdish					.785**	.274
Age	-.004	.010	.004	.006	.008	.006
Education	.094	.108	.032	.064	-.090	.074
Income	.346*	.154	.228**	.087	-.083	.100
Economic security	-.098	.158	.366***	.105	.414***	.111
Religiosity	.019	.079	-.049	.046	-.114*	.050
Constant	-2.244	1.178	-.620	.683	.673	.746
Chi square	12.060		53.874***		144.534***	
Cox, Nagelkerke	.021/.035		.060/.081		.152/.203	
% Predicted	84.1		65.6		68.2	
N	570		865		888	
	Jordan		Lebanon		Palestine	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Support for Democracy	-.166*	.074	.101	.060	-.005	.069
Support for Secularism	-.084	.055	.070	.049	.125*	.052
Support for Feminism	.164**	.058	.035	.042	.122*	.055
Women	-.347*	.159	-.117	.136	.099	.141
Christian	.446	.165	1.360***	.135	.825*	.386
Palestinian	-.636**	.451				
Age	.002*	.001	.016***	.004	.009	.005
Education	.150	.087	-.033	.063	-.229**	.076
Income	.084	.089	-.039	.079	.094	.072
Economic security	.075	.093	.365***	.104	-.021	.088
Religiosity	.189***	.041	.013	.030	-.095*	.038
Constant	-1.528*	.741	-3.154***	.668	-.786	.647
Chi square	67.382***		196.000***		54.917***	
Cox, Nagelkerke	.078/.109		.152/.203		.058/.078	
% Predicted	68.2		68.8		60.8	
N	836		1180		927	

Significance * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

	Saudi A.		Sudan		Tunisia	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Support for Democracy	.004	.066	-.120*	.053	.001	.087
Support for Secularism	.226***	.056	.225***	.046	.111	.059
Support for Feminism	.031	.060	.119*	.053	.017	.065
Women	-.340	.178	.564***	.133	-.019	.160
Shia	.453	.426				
Age	.004	.008	.001	.001	.007	.006
Education	.089	.091	.080	.050	-.037	.066
Income	.406***	.100	.159*	.071	-.096	.087
Economic security	-.343***	.092	-.001	.076	.046	.108
Religiosity	-.153**	.054	.162***	.039	-.134*	.057
Constant	-1.525	.798	-2.981***	.639	-.247	.784
Chi square	85.579***		80.950***		15.273	
Cox, Nagelkerke	.113/.152		.073/.098		.021/.029	
% Predicted	67.4		64.2		55.3	
N	705		1058		709	
	Yemen					
	B	S.E.				
Support for Democracy	.024	.065				
Support for Secularism	.032	.062				
Support for Feminism	.189**	.062				
Women	.341*	.169				
Age	.002	.007				
Education	-.036	.072				
Income	-.337**	.106				
Economic security	.144	.111				
Religiosity	.106*	.047				
Constant	-1.915*	.739				
Chi square	45.450***					
Cox/Nagelkerke	.063/.085					
% Predicted	66.9					
N	754					

Significance * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Even more noticeable is the positive impact of support for gender equality as set out in hypothesis III. With supporters of the political empowerment of women emerging as supporters of peace in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Sudan, and Yemen, no other variable can exert the same consistent, cross-country impact. In Saudi Arabia, support for gender equality is positively correlated with peace in models which do not control for support for democracy and secularism. This suggests that in Saudi Arabia, supporters of gender equality are more likely to support peace with Israel, because they are more likely to be secular (Spearman's r .325***) and supporters of democracy (.330***). Only in Algeria, Lebanon, and Tunisia does support for gender equality not exert any influence irrespective of model specification. The findings presented here thus suggest that the wider societal embrace of any broader Arab-Israel peace would, indeed, deepen in parallel with increasing support for gender

equality norms. Taken together, these country-level models clearly demonstrate the power of emancipative political values in shaping support for peace with Israel among Arab publics. Apart from the single exception of Algeria, in all countries under consideration support for secularism and/or gender equality increases support for peace.

Most of the control variables behave in the expected way. In line with Tessler and Warriner's (1997) as well as Tessler, Nachtwey and Grant's earlier findings (1999), gender in itself does not emerge as a predictor of attitudes towards peace with Israel. Once attitudes toward secularism and feminism are controlled for, gender ceases to be significant in the pooled models. Arab women are more likely to support peace since they are more likely to support gender equality (table XIV, supplementary file). Reflecting the findings of the pooled model, only in Sudan and Yemen is the positive impact of gender robust to the inclusion of the equally positive impact of support for gender equality. In Jordan, women are, by contrast, less likely to support peace.

The negative impact of educational attainment is small in substantive terms. The predicted probability of supporting peace only decreases from 46.1 percent among illiterate respondents to 42.7 percent among university graduates. Among the country-level models, education is only significant in Palestine. This finding is in line with previous research which had shown that more educated Palestinians were less likely to support reconciliation (Shamir and Shikaki, 2002) and less likely to hold positive attitudes about coexistence and peace (Tessler and Nachtwey, 1999). A comparison of models 1, 2, and 3 in table 2 suggest that this negative relationship between education and views on peace only emerges when attitudes toward secularism and feminism are controlled for. Models fitting support for secularism and feminism (table XIV, supplementary file) find that education in fact increases support for secularism and feminism. This suggests that the negative association between education and peace is limited to those Arab men and women whose higher educational achievements have not led to the endorsement of the separation of politics and religion and gender equality.

The greater ability to meet daily expenses or put money aside increases support for peace with Israel irrespective of model specification (table 2). The substantive impact, however, is relatively small with the predicted probability of endorsing peace with Israel standing at 41.4 percent among those unable to cover their basic expenses and 45.9 percent among those able to set money aside each month. This link is confirmed in the country-level analysis. Wealthier respondents across a diverse set of countries such as resource-rich Algeria and Saudi Arabia or resource-poor Egypt and Sudan are more likely to support peace with Israel. Indeed, in Algeria income is the only variable

significantly predicting greater support for peace. In addition, Tessler and Nachtwey's earlier findings (1998) on the impact of positive views of the national economy find support in the case of Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon. Only in Yemen and Saudi Arabia are the relationships between income and perceptions of the national economy on the one hand and peace on the other hand negative. This would suggest that poorer Yemenis and those Saudis who are more skeptical regarding the general economic outlook hope to benefit from a cessation of Arab-Israeli hostilities. This leaves Jordan, Palestine, and Tunisia as the only countries where economic considerations have no direct impact on support for peace. This individual-level evidence would not surprise Hegre, Oneal, and Russett (2010: 763) who demonstrated that 'commerce promotes peace because violence has substantial costs, whether these are paid prospectively or contemporaneously.'

The pooled models are in line with earlier country studies insofar as Arab Christians (predicted probability of 69.2 percent) are more likely to support peace than their Muslim compatriots (41.0 percent). Yet, in Egypt and Jordan, where leaders of Christian communities were seen as close to the authoritarian regimes which concluded and maintained peace treaties with Israel (Guirguis, 2012; Yom, 2009), the impact of this variable is not noticeable in the country-level analysis. In Lebanon and Palestine, by contrast, the variable capturing Christian faith is significantly correlated with greater support for peace even when attitudes on secularism and gender equality are controlled for. In Lebanon, Israeli governments had long tended to view the Christian community as a potential partner against Palestinian and Shiite groups (Barak, 2010) with Christian political elites (Khashan, 2009) and the wider community (Haddad, 2002) reported to view Israel as a (potential) partner too. In the case of Palestine, Christian Arabs might hope to benefit particularly from increased religious tourism or the weakening of radical Islamist groups such as Hamas (Kaartveeit, 2013).

In Iraq, the greater support of peace among Kurdish respondents confirms previous analysis of mutual affinity (Bengio, 2014). The greater resistance to the two-state solution outlined above among Jordan's Palestinians is likely to reflect the hope among East Bank Jordanians that such an agreement would put to rest any Israeli aspirations to turn Jordan into an 'alternative homeland' for Palestinians (Scham and Lucas, 2003). The stronger rejection of peace among Iraqi Shiites when compared to their Sunni compatriots does not constitute direct evidence for a 'Shia crescent' (Barzegar, 2008) threatening Israel. This is because in Saudi Arabia the variable for Shia religious identity is not significant. Indeed, when secularism is dropped from the final model, Saudi Shiites are even more likely than their Sunni compatriots to support peace with Israel. This suggests that Saudi Shiites are more likely to support peace with Israel because they see this as an opportunity to reduce the prominent role of Wahhabi interpretations of Islam in their country.

Huntington's primordial views on the conflict-escalating impact of Islam run counter to the finding that religiosity as measured in the voluntary engagement with religious texts and religious study is not a significant cross-country predictor of lower support for peace with Israel (table 2). While religiosity does decrease support for secularism and feminism (table XIV, supplementary file), there is no general association between religiosity and support for peace whether support for secularism and feminism is controlled for (table 2) or not (table XIV, supplementary file). Country-level models suggest that the relationship between religiosity and support for peace is, instead, strongly context-dependent. In Iraq, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia more religious respondents are less likely to support the peace proposal analyzed here. In Tunisia, religiosity even emerges as the central fault line in separating supporters of peace with Israel from its opponents. The negative correlation between religiosity and support for peace or reconciliation has been demonstrated in the Palestinian case before (Mi'ari, 1999). In Jordan, Sudan, and Yemen, by contrast, religious respondents are more likely to support peace. These inconsistent observations confirm earlier findings (Tessler and Nachtwey, 1998) that Orientalist assumptions about the direct, conflict-escalating impact of Islamic religiosity do not capture empirical reality. They are also in line with findings that religious identities and practices can be linked with both increased (Pakistan) and decreased (Egypt) support for political violence among Muslim respondents (Berger 2014). They thus support constructivist arguments about the centrality of differing religious discourses in shaping views on political issues (Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2000).

The significant positive correlation between age and peace (table 2) raises the question of whether this reflects a particular pro-peace attitude of an older generation who came of age during the major interstate wars of the 1960s and 1970s or whether this reflects the particular disillusionment of the younger generation who came of age during the failed Oslo peace process, the Al-Aqsa intifada and Israel's wars with Hamas and Hezbollah. The country-level models in table 3 point toward the second interpretation. The fact that Palestine and Lebanon have seen Israeli military action and that Jordan is home to many Palestinians with relatives in the occupied territories would suggest that Israel's occupation and military activities did contribute to a greater disillusionment with peace among the younger generation.

Conclusion

This analysis provided robust evidence for the impact of democratic norms on Arab perceptions of peace with Israel. The finding that support for secularism and gender equality are firmly linked with

greater support for peace with Israel among Arab publics corroborates Henderson's (1998) insistence that the democratic peace thesis is better described as a 'joint freedom proposition' and Doyle's (1986) conceptualization of Democratic Peace as resting on liberalism's respect for the moral equality of individuals. By demonstrating the explanatory power of attitudes on gender equality specifically, this study offers an example of how the perceived gap between realist security studies and 'emancipative' gender studies (Tickner 2004) can be overcome. In a context where less than eight percent of the peace treaties signed during the first two decades after the end of the Cold War included women on the negotiating teams (Verveer 2012: 91), this study's results only reinforce Caprioli's (2000) conclusion that those interested in peace would do well to invest more into organizations supporting the equal status of women.

These results also further undermine Huntington's (1996) primordialist view on Islam. Contrary to the Orientalists' essentializing view of Islam as a never-changing, one-dimensional causal factor in the political behavior of Muslims, this study shows that as cultural change in the Muslim world occurs along the path set in Western societies, albeit at a slower pace (Norris and Inglehart, 2002), the chances of the acceptance of Israel in the region increase. The finding that Egypt is the only country with an outright majority in favor of a two-state solution on terms acceptable to Israel might serve to reinforce Israeli skepticism. Yet, the positive impact of greater socio-economic security as well as support for political gender equality and the separation of religion and politics would suggest that further socio-economic and socio-cultural development across the Arab world will strengthen public support for peace with Israel. This study shows that, if the United States and partners like the EU can bring Israelis and Palestinians to agree to a compromise whose main contours have been very clear for more than a decade now (see scenarios tested in Shamir and Shikaki, 2005 or Telhami and Kull, 2013), then the parties involved can count on the existence of a clearly identifiable set of Arab men and women whose economic considerations as well as normative political preferences lead them to support such a compromise. Contrary to the claims of Israeli skeptics, Arab hostility to a peace agreement which includes the recognition of Israel as the home of the Jewish people is not inevitable. Indeed, in light of findings that cooperation based on common morality will be more enduring than cooperation purely based on self-interest (Ripsman, 2005), the social-cultural transformation of the Arab world toward the greater acceptance of a reduced role of religion in politics as well as greater support for gender equality is likely to increase the chances of a 'warm peace' to emerge between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The expectation of early liberal Zionists that modernization and Westernization of the Arab world would make the region more likely to accept Israel's existence (Gause and Lustick 2012: 6) therefore does find empirical support. This is, however, subject to two

main conditions. First, as the formulation in this study's dependent variable makes clear, such acceptance depends on Israel's reciprocal recognition and implementation of the Palestinians' right to their own state. Second, democratic political structures need to be in place to allow economic self-interest (Hegre, Oneal, and Russett, 2010) or normative preferences (Maoz and Russett, 1993) to shape government policies in the Arab world. As Inglehart, Puranen, and Welzel (2015: 419) explained, democracy offers the crucial vehicle via which normative change is translated into more peaceful foreign policy behavior:

Our species is adopting more peaceful, feminine and humanistic orientations as opportunities arise that make these orientations more useful in mastering life, providing an increasingly solid mass basis for interstate peace.

While approval of democracy in itself is not linked to greater support for peace, it would still be short-sighted to treat this finding as an argument in favor of authoritarian stability. This is because robust democratic structures would allow rationalist and normative dimensions of Arab support for peace with Israel to influence government policies. In other words, if Arab governments would truly listen to their populations, then the economic considerations of Arab men and women as well as the normative preferences in favor of a reduced role of religion in politics and in support of gender equality would make a considerable number of them look very favorably at post-conflict normalization between Israel and its Arab neighbors. This conclusion has broader implications. The ruthless attacks against liberal voices and supporters of gender equality across the region (Amnesty International 2016) are not just a matter of domestic concern. By silencing these potential supporters of mutual recognition and international cooperation, authoritarian governments make a more peaceful political future for the region harder to achieve. The United States and other Western actors therefore have the opportunity to safeguard their interest in regional peace and stability in a way which is sustainable in the long-run and in line with normative aspirations. Instead of relying on an authoritarian status quo which produces weak socio-economic development (Abu-Bader and Abu-Qarn, 2003) and increased support for anti-Western violence (Berger, 2014), the United States and its allies need to invest in promoting political reform which would enable a fairer distribution of the economic benefits of existing peace treaties and encourage greater support for women's rights. This analysis shows that the idea of Arab public support for peace between Israel and its neighbors is not as naïve as it sounds at first glance. Those seeking to bring it about can count on the logic of economic self-interest and the considerable number of Arab supporters of secularism and gender equality.

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Replication

The data set and any other supporting materials employed for the analysis can be accessed via a supplementary data file hosted on SAGE's CMPS website.

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