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Life, Pocketbook, or Culture

The Role of Perceived Security Threats in Promoting Exclusionist Political Attitudes toward Minorities in Israel

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This article tests the role played by different sources of threat perception in shaping exclusionist political attitudes of the majority toward two distinct minority groups in Israel: non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Palestinian citizens of Israel. The authors distinguish between the impact of security, economic, and symbolic threats on exclusionist political attitudes. A structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis indicated that regardless of the different levels of each threat posed by a minority group, a perceived security threat is a key predictor of exclusionist political attitudes toward different minority groups.

Keywords: *exclusionist political attitudes; threat perceptions; minorities; Israel; ethnic relations*

Bigotry toward minority groups has been a pervasive societal phenomenon in most human societies, including democratic ones (Allport 1954). The recent wave of international immigration, mainly into Western societies, has reinforced negative feelings and xenophobic attitudes and has given rise to widespread support for social and political exclusionism of various ethnic minorities and immigrants (Raijman, Semyonov, and Schmidt 2003). In addition, the continuing terror attacks on various democratic countries have reemphasized the interrelation between perceived threats and the non-democratic attitudes and practices of individuals and groups. However, some argue that two pertinent bodies of literature—social-psychological studies on prejudice and political works on ethnic conflicts—exist largely in isolation from one another (Green and Seher 2003). We take a political-psychological analytical perspective to understand *exclusionist political attitudes* toward minority groups in the shadow of war and terrorism.

Exclusionist political attitudes are among the most common and destructive examples of the non-democratic practices that can be so insidious. While a subset of exclusionist political attitudes, ethnic exclusionism in its broader interpretation reflects a variety of social phenomena, all indicating that the majority in a certain society wishes to exclude minorities (Coenders and Scheepers 2003). Coenders (2001, 67) distinguished between different types of ethnic

exclusionism, “referring to different target out-groups, such as exclusionism of resident ethnic out-group members, exclusionism of immigrants, and exclusionism of political refugees.” In the current study, we focus on the political aspects of ethnic exclusionism and mainly on the opposition to the granting of civil and political rights to resident and immigrant minority groups (Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders 2002; Raijman, Semyonov, and Schmidt 2003; Raijman and Semyonov 2004; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004).

Increasing levels of negative and exclusionist political attitudes toward minority groups have drawn the attention of social scientists seeking to develop a deeper understanding of the main determinants of this problematic political phenomenon and its implications for political behavior. Threat perception is considered by most scholars as the single best predictor of hostile intergroup attitudes such as prejudice, intolerance, xenophobia (Sullivan et al. 1985;

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Quillian 1995; Stephan and Stephan 2001), and ethnic exclusionism (Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders 2002; Raijman, Semyonov, and Schmidt 2003). The subjective perception of threat contributes to the cognitive evaluation of the individual regarding the ways in which out-group members might harm in-group members or interfere with in-group members' desire to achieve their goals (Fiske and Ruscher 1993).

The evolution of the study of perceived threat has resulted in a consensus among most scholars regarding the complexity and the multidimensionality of this concept. Contemporary social-psychological theories such as integrated threat theory (Stephan and Stephan 1996, 2001) have combined a variety of threat sources that promote negative attitudes toward groups (Corenblum and Stephan 2001). The current theoretical dispute focuses on examining the different roles of realistic threats vis-à-vis symbolic threats in creating exclusionary political attitudes (Legge 1996; Berinsky, Crenshaw, and Mendelberg 2004). While *realistic threat* refers mainly to a potential harm to tangible or concrete objects (e.g., money, land, human life), *symbolic threat* contains various potential threats to relatively abstract aspects of the state, such as threats to the in-group's identity, value system, belief system, or worldview (e.g., language, religion, morality) (Duckitt 2003). Curiously, a review of the bulk of the literature on perceived threat shows that despite current world affairs, which are characterized by salient and/or perceived threat of violence and terror associated with minorities, the role of perceived security threat in predicting negative political attitudes is still understudied (Coryn, Beale, and Myers 2004; Fekete 2004). We argue that to maintain and even increase its viability, any democratic regime must understand, alter, and manage perceived threats.

This study examines the role of different sources of threat perceptions—security, economic, and symbolic—as antecedents of exclusionist political attitudes toward different minority groups of citizens: native Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCIs), who are Israeli Arabs; and non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union (NJIs). Although both groups may motivate perceptions of threat among majority group members in Israel, their unique characteristics offer differentiation between the specific types of threat they are perceived to pose. We suggest that a comparison of the intensity of threats posed by each group, along with an evaluation of the relative impact of each threat on exclusionist political attitudes toward each group, could shed new light on the on the focused determinants of anti-democratic practices (For a similar assumption, see Cottrell and Neuberg 2005).

To this end, in the first stage we conceptually define the three sources of threat and discuss their potential relations to exclusionist political attitudes, mainly relying on two analytical frameworks: realistic group conflict theory and social identity theory. In the second stage, we describe the Israeli context and particularly the relevant minority groups and the nature of their predicted threat to the majority group members. To understand the nature of the relations between different sources of threat and exclusionism for each group, in the third stage we analyze a public opinion survey administered to a national representative sample in Israel.

Who Is Hostile toward Minorities, When, and How?

One of the seminal works on intergroup relations is Allport's (1954) work on prejudice. Over the years, numerous other studies have presented different concepts, theories, and explanations of negative social and political attitudes toward minorities (for a review of the literature, see Duckitt 2003). However, by and large most scholars have repeatedly referred to the pivotal role played by threat and fear in producing these attitudes (Allport 1954; Stephan and Stephan 2001; Duckitt 2003; Huddy 2003). At the same time, the importance of perceived threat in stimulating negative attitudes toward out-groups has been well established empirically (e.g., Doty, Peterson, and Winter 1991; Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders 2002).

Despite this work, the concept of perceived threat is still somewhat vague, as Huddy (2003) rightfully claimed. Integrated threat theory (Stephan and Stephan 2001) breaks down the general conception of perceived threat into two types of threat: (1) intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes as an expression of threat on the *individual level*; and (2) realistic and symbolic threats, which reflect threats stemming from the *collective/group level*. Although integrated threat theory has been extensively examined in numerous studies in a variety of contexts (e.g., Corenblum and Stephan 2001; Stephan and Stephan 2001; Schwarzwald and Sabo-Manor 2005), most studies do not address the relative impact of each source of threat in explaining exclusionist political attitudes. Although perceived security threats have recently been introduced into the study of intergroup relations (e.g., Huddy et al. 2002, 2005), the relative impact of security threats on exclusionist attitudes toward minority groups as compared to that of economic and symbolic threats has yet to be comprehensively studied. Furthermore, studies comparing

exclusionist political attitudes toward immigrants vis-à-vis native minorities are almost nowhere to be found.

Traditionally, economic threat has been the focus of realistic group conflict theory (Sherif et al. 1961; Sherif 1966; Levine and Campbell 1972), which refers to threat to the economic power of the in-group as well as to threats and challenges to the welfare of the in-group and its members (Cosser 1956). Levine and Campbell (1972) have noted that realistic conflict or competition between groups will inherently involve each group posing a real threat to the resources and well-being of the other groups. This could be a threat to the allocation of social resources, competition for jobs, or other types of economic competition. The role of perceived economic threat in predicting negative intergroup attitudes has been extensively documented in numerous empirical studies (e.g., Espenshade and Hampstead 1996; Esses et al. 2001; Halperin, Pedahzur, and Canetti-Nisim 2007).

Symbolic threat, however, has its origins in social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Social identity theory asserts that group membership creates in-group self-categorization and enhancement in ways that favor the in-group at the expense of the out-group. As we have mentioned, the general concept of symbolic threat may refer to various aspects of a society's common ideological and psychological repertoire. It could be understood in general as a threat to the social identity of the dominant group (McLaren 2003) or in a more focused way as a threat to specific values, norms, or ideologies of that group (Hitlan et al. forthcoming). In this study, following Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders (2002), we define symbolic threat in a general way as a threat to what individuals may define as their way of life. As many correlational and experimental studies have shown, symbolic threats predict exclusionist attitudes toward minorities (Stephan et al. 1998; Stephan and Stephan 2001). Moreover, recent studies in Europe have revealed that in some cases symbolic threat, being culturally based, is more significant than economic threat in predicting such attitudes (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004; Citrin and Sides forthcoming).

To recapitulate existing claims and findings, economic (realistic) and symbolic threats are quite common explanations for exclusionist attitudes toward minorities. Following recent post-9/11 political studies (e.g., Huddy et al. 2002; Huddy 2003; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004), we contend that perceived threat to the security of one's reference group might have a significant impact on attitudes toward out-groups. In such cases, the rationalization underlying the perceived threat is based on fear stemming from involvement of members of a minority group in actions (violent and nonviolent) undermining the

existence of the host state, terror attacks included (Huddy et al. 2002). Intense fear may induce generalized attribution to the minority group, delegitimization of the out-group members, hatred, and eventually exclusionist and other aggressive political attitudes toward them (for a literature review, see Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal 2006).

We emphasize that economic and security threats are different facets of realistic threat, based on a challenge to the group's economic or physical well-being, and distinct from symbolic threats, which challenge the in-group's norms and values. Thus, the question we raise is, In a post-9/11 world, what is the relative impact of each of the three sources of threat on political exclusionist attitudes toward different types of minorities? We assume that because security threats are threats to life itself, they will have a prominent impact on exclusionist attitudes. It should be noted that this study focuses on collective security threats (e.g., political violence), rather than personal threat (e.g., crime). We further assume that the role of economic versus symbolic threat is dependent on the specific contexts of the relationships between the out-group and the in-group, a topic with which we deal in the following section.¹

The Israeli Political Context

In the face of ongoing violence, terrorism, and economic concerns, Israel provides an excellent setting for the study of these different sources of threat. The Israeli milieu facilitates an examination of realistic vis-à-vis symbolic threats in light of the perceptions of the Jewish majority group toward distinct minority groups. Specifically, Israel's ethno-national character as a Jewish state, the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, the complex relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and massive waves of immigration (Shafir and Peled 2002) have turned Israel into a laboratory conducive to the study of the development of negative political attitudes toward various minority groups (Raijman and Semyonov 2004). Minority groups at the heart of this study differ in their origin, their social characteristics, and in the types of threats they seem to pose to majority group members.

PCIs constitute the largest ethnic minority in Israel at roughly 19 percent of the population (Central Bureau of Statistics 2006). Yet despite their rather stable percentage in Israeli society, their potential growth is a constant source of dispute (see Schueftan 2007). They and their forebears lived in Israel (Palestine) for centuries prior to the establishment of

the modern nation of Israel. Formally citizens, PCIs are in reality excluded from full membership in Israeli society because of its ethno-national character (Shafir and Peled 2002). With the nature of their inclusion in Israeli society a matter of perpetual debate, they are formally discriminated against by Israeli laws and institutions and informally by Jewish Israelis (for a detailed discussion see Shafir and Peled 2002).²

Under the special circumstances of the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, numerous Jewish Israelis perceive PCIs to be a hostile minority as well as a group with national, religious, and cultural ties to the “enemy”—the Arab world. Furthermore, according to Smootha (2004), a large number of Israelis believe that many PCIs support terrorist activity in various ways and that they are a source for future popular uprisings against the state of Israel.³ Violent demonstrations by Israeli Arabs on the Temple Mount in 2000 and 2007 have reinforced beliefs in some (mainly right-wing) quarters that PCIs are a threat to the existence of the state. We thus assume that the security threat will be substantial where PCIs are concerned.

A second source of realistic threat posed by PCIs is economic. By and large, PCIs are the most underprivileged group in Israel, and numerous PCIs are thus dependent on the Israeli welfare system (Shafir and Peled 2002). Yet given the marginality of the issue of poverty in public discourse in Israel, as compared to the issue of national security, we expect that the economic threat would not be as pivotal as the security one. Finally, in contrast to the two realistic threats, the perceived symbolic threat posed by PCIs to the Jewish in-group is less clear. The symbolic values of Israel are identified with those of the Jewish people, while PCI norms and values are very different. PCIs are not assimilated into Israeli culture and, in the minds of many Israeli Jews, are a remote out-group (Smootha 2004). Considering these preliminary findings, it is expected that the perception of symbolic threat deriving from PCIs will be relatively minor compared to the realistic security threats.

Now we turn our attention to a minority group actually encouraged to join Israeli society in spite of their ambiguous status as Jews. NJIs are Israelis who have immigrated to Israel since 1989 from the former Soviet Union, eligible for immigration according to state law, but not Jewish according to Jewish religious law.⁴ They were part of a massive wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union to Israel that has changed the social and political fabric of Israeli society (Al-Haj 2004). In particular, those who have Jewish family ties were encouraged to immigrate to Israel.

Some would argue (e.g., Lustick 1999) that this policy was part of the state’s effort to increase the “non-Arab” majority of Israel. According to informal estimates, today NJIs number about three hundred thousand and constitute 4.3 percent of the Israeli population and 30 percent of the immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Central Bureau of Statistics 2006; Cohen 2006). According to a field study performed in 1999, 26.1 percent of the adult immigrants who came from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s are not Jews according to Jewish law (*halakhah*) or cannot prove that they are (Al-Haj 2004). Surprisingly, there are only a few empirical studies focusing on these non-Jewish immigrants, and hence the picture of their integration into Israeli society is less than clear. On one hand, they are in a process of “sociological conversion” (Cohen 2006), and they are quite assimilated into Israeli society (Leshem and Lisak 2000). On the other hand, however, their Russian cultural identity (Al-Haj 2004), along with their Orthodox Christian faith—which they usually practice publicly and openly—have led several groups, especially religious parties and their constituencies, to protest their immigration to Israel (Sheleg 2004).

With no visible connection between NJIs and enemies of Israel, we have no apparent reason to assume that NJIs are particularly perceived as a security threat to the Jewish majority. Nonetheless, like any group of outsiders, we assume that they will represent a potential source of economic threat, particularly a threat to the welfare services due to their large numbers (Halperin, Pedahzur, and Canetti-Nisim 2007). Without strong realistic threats, the significant character of NJIs as a distinct cultural and religious group may be as a source of symbolic threat to Jews. In fact, we expect that the symbolic threat posed by NJIs would be significant, mainly due to the perception of majority group members that the newcomers have the potential to change the ethnic composition of the population and even create a certain threat to the Jewish character of the state.

Regardless of the threats that each group is assumed to pose, we may suppose that the excluding attitudes toward PCIs will be significantly higher than the attitudes toward NJIs. By and large, recent empirical studies on attitudes of the Jewish majority in Israel toward various minority groups—including new immigrants from the former Soviet Union—indicate that PCIs are the most hated as well as the most expelled minority group (Canetti-Nisim and Pedahzur 2003; Rajzman and Semyonov 2004; Shamir and Sagiv-Schifter 2006; Halperin, Pedahzur, and Canetti-Nisim 2007).

In line with theoretical knowledge regarding the characteristics of both groups and their positions within the Israeli society as well as empirical evidence, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 1: Exclusionary political attitudes toward NJIs will be lower than exclusionary political attitudes toward PCIs.⁵

Hypothesis 2: The perceived security threat from PCIs will be considerably higher than economic and symbolic threats, while the perceived security threat from NJIs will be considerably lower than economic and symbolic threats.

Existing works on the different sources of threat posed by each of the groups do not necessarily provide an answer to the question regarding the relative impact of each of the threats on exclusionary political attitudes. On one hand, we may argue that the relationship between different threat sources and exclusionist political attitudes is “group-based.” If that were the case, the dominant kind of threat for each of the groups (i.e., security—PCIs; symbolic/economic—NJIs) would also create the most prominent impact on exclusionist attitudes toward a given group. On the other hand, if the relations between different threat sources and exclusionism had not been dependent on the character of the group, the hierarchy of the impact of threats on exclusionist political attitudes would be similar for both groups, regardless of levels of threat posed by each group. We submit that an examination of perceived levels of threats related to each group, in addition to the assessment of the relative influence of each threat source on exclusionism for each group, is called for and may shed light on which threat best activates exclusionist sentiments.

The Nationally Representative Survey

We used a random sampling of land lines to obtain a representative sample of our target group at the time of the survey, which took place in July 2005. Interviews were conducted by an experienced, computerized survey institute in Israel using trained telephone-survey interviewers. Our study design called for a target population of adult (eighteen years or older) Jewish citizens of Israel who were either born in Israel or immigrated to Israel prior to 1989, when the recent massive wave of immigration of Jews and non-Jews from the former Soviet Union began. Our intention was to ensure that respondents were not new immigrants from the former Soviet Union who might have family ties with NJIs.⁶

With this design, family connections did not bias respondent attitudes toward NJIs. This sampling procedure led to a total sample that represents 82 percent of the Jewish citizens of Israel (excluding mainly immigrants from the former Soviet Union). The overall response rate was 42 percent, and the cooperation rate was 50 percent. A total of 504 interviews were completed and analyzed.⁷

The sample consisted of 237 men (47 percent) and 267 women (53 percent) with ages ranging from 18 to 78 years, with a mean age of 45 ($SD = 16.9$). Thirty percent of the respondents considered themselves moderate or strong rightist, 32.7 percent said they were centrist, and 26 percent left-wing. Of the respondents, 33.8 percent estimated their family income as below the average in Israel, 19.6 percent earned the average income, and 46.6 percent earned above the average. The sample represented the distribution in the Israeli Jewish population of gender, age, place of residence, and political orientation (Central Bureau of Statistics 2006).

We used a structured questionnaire drawn from several measures that was completed by most participants in approximately twenty minutes. The questionnaire included measures of exclusionist political attitudes toward PCIs and NJIs and a combined threat perception scale. These items were answered on a scale from 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 6 (*very strongly agree*). Sociopolitical information was obtained regarding participants' income, level of education, political stance, and religiosity.

Exclusionist political attitudes toward PCIs and NJIs were assessed by a six-item scale adapted from Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders (2002), which was found to have broad, cross-cultural applicability across fifteen countries. The scale consists of the following items: “PCIs/NJIs should have the same welfare rights as Jewish citizens”; “PCIs/NJIs should have the same education services as Jewish citizens”; “PCI/NJI family members are entitled to Israeli citizenship”; “It is appropriate that PCIs/NJIs will dwell in the state of Israel”; “PCIs/NJIs should be able to participate in elections”; “PCIs/NJIs should be able to participate in different political activities, like Jewish citizens.” Internal reliabilities were found to be highly acceptable; ($\alpha = .89$) for NJIs and ($\alpha = .91$) for PCIs.

Three sources of *threat perceptions* were measured by well-established threat perception statements previously examined and validated in Israel. *Economic threat* was assessed with “PCIs/NJIs pose a threat to the welfare system,” which was developed by Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders (2002) and

further tested in Israel and in Germany by Raijman, Semyonov, and Schmidt (2003). *Security threat* was assessed with "PCIs/NJIs pose a threat to the security of the state of Israel," based on measures tested in Israel by Sullivan et al. (1985) and Shamir and Sagiv-Schifter (2006). *Symbolic threat* was assessed with "The cultural and religious habits of PCIs/NJIs pose a threat to the Israeli way of life," based upon symbolic threat measures used by Scheepers, Gijssberts, and Coenders (2002) in Europe and by Schwarzwald and Sabo-Manor (2005) in Israel.

It can be suggested that a spillover of the Israeli-Arab conflict may result in the development of a general fear for security difficult to break down into individual elements. In line with the conceptual discussion earlier in this article, we contend that different sources of threat perception are distinct concepts. To statistically validate the distinctiveness of the threat sources (for each minority group) by means of structural equation modeling, the path between symbolic threat from PCIs and security threat from PCIs was first examined without constraint; it was then constrained to equal (indicating identical concepts). The constraint produced a significant change at the level of $p \leq .0001$ ($\Delta\chi^2 = 18.04$, $\Delta df = 1$). The same holds true for symbolic threat versus security threat from NJIs ($\Delta\chi^2 = 47.54$, $\Delta df = 1$). These tests show that the concepts are related but clearly distinct (additionally, see Table 2, which reveals high and positive correlations). However, none of the correlations was exceptionally high (above $r = .60$), and hence we should not expect any multicollinearity effects in multivariate analyses (Bagozzi, Yi, and Phillips 1991).

Sociodemographic and political control variables included participants' self-definition of political orientation (*strong right* = 1 to *strong left* = 5), self-definition regarding the level of religiosity (1 = secular, 2 = traditional, 3 = religious, 4 = ultra-Orthodox), educational attainment (years of education), and self-evaluation of income level vis-à-vis the average gross income in Israel (1 = *far below average* to 5 = *far above average*).⁸

Testing the Hypotheses

In the first stage, the means and standard deviations for all variables were calculated and broken down by immigrants versus ethnic minority. Paired *t*-tests were performed to determine where there were significant differences in the mean levels of these variables by minority group. In the second stage, bivariate correlation analyses were performed to

provide basic information on the relationships among the study variables. In the final stage, we advanced a structural equation model (SEM) using AMOS 6 with the full information maximum likelihood procedure (Arbuckle and Wothke 1999).⁹

Surprisingly, our first-stage findings (see Table 1) run counter to the prediction of Hypothesis 1. The level of exclusionist political attitudes toward NJIs was found to be significantly higher than the level of exclusionist political attitudes toward PCIs. A glance at one of the interesting items comprising these scales shows that "only" 45 percent of the respondents negated the idea of granting equal political rights to PCIs, while 58 percent negated the idea of granting equal political rights to NJIs (the wording of the item is, "PCIs/NJIs are entitled to participate in different political activities, like Jewish citizens"). Because empirical works show unequivocally higher levels of exclusion of PCIs as compared to any other group in the Israeli society, these findings are both unforeseen and counterintuitive. Yet as far as we know, no other study has looked at attitudes toward non-Jewish immigrants. Hence, these findings open the door for further discussion of some aspects of intergroup relations, as will be elaborated in the implications section.

Table 1 also shows that there are significant differences between the two groups with respect to the level of all three sources of perceived threat. Naturally, the greatest differences were found concerning the security threat. The mean score of perceived security threat from PCIs was much higher than perceived security threat from NJIs. Put differently, while 39 percent of the respondents said that PCIs pose a threat to the national security of Israel, only 16 percent of the respondents felt that NJIs pose such a threat. On the other hand, differences between the levels of economically perceived threat were found to be significant but relatively subsidiary, as mean threat posed by PCIs was lower than that posed by NJIs. In line with our expectations, levels of symbolic threat from NJIs were much higher than the symbolic threat from PCIs.

The findings regarding threat perceptions indicate two idiosyncratic hierarchies of threats perceived as posed by the two types of minority groups. Above all, PCIs are perceived to pose security and economic threats and, to a lesser extent, a symbolic threat. NJIs, however, are primarily perceived to pose economic and symbolic threats and, to a lesser extent, a security threat to members of the majority group. In a broader perspective, while an ethnic minority is chiefly perceived to be a security and economic threat to the very existence of the state, new immigrants are mainly perceived as threatening

Table 1
Comparing Attitudes (*t*-Test) of the Jewish Group toward Non-Jewish Immigrants (NJIs) and Palestinian Citizens of Israel (PCIs)

	PCIs		NJIs		<i>t</i>
	M	SD	M	SD	
Exclusionist political attitudes	2.92	1.59	3.33	1.57	-7.17***
Economic threat	3.79	1.90	4.16	1.80	3.89***
Security threat	3.77	1.84	2.53	1.75	-14.39***
Symbolic threat	2.55	1.70	3.11	1.94	6.36***

Note: Bold entries are the highest coefficients.
 ***Significant at the $p < .0001$ level.

the general economic situation as well as the norms and values of the host society.

In the second stage, we found that for the most part, correlations between the study variables were significant at the level of $p \leq .0001$ (see Table 2). There were two exceptions, however: levels of income and education had no effect on perceived economic threat posed by NJIs. In other words, respondents of various levels of education and income reported high economic threat. All correlations were in the expected direction; threats were positively correlated with exclusion, and by and large, people of higher socioeconomic levels are less inclined to endorse exclusionist political attitudes toward both groups. None of the correlations between the independent variables was exceptionally high (see discussion of appropriate correlations in Bagozzi, Yi, and Phillips 1991).

The findings indicate several preliminary patterns. Exclusionist political attitudes toward NJIs are correlated, in descending order, with security, symbolic, and economic threats. The picture arising from correlations related to PCIs is similar, though not identical: exclusionist political attitudes toward PCIs are correlated with, in descending order, security, economic, and symbolic threats. Of the sociodemographic variables, religiosity level and political orientation showed the highest correlations with both dependent variables (exclusionist political attitudes toward NJIs and PCIs, respectively).

Although interesting, the differences between the levels of threat and bivariate correlations between the study variables alone do not explain the roles played by threats in predicting exclusionist political attitudes toward distinct minorities. In the final stage of our study, we advanced an SEM using AMOS 6 (see Table 3 and Figure 1). The large number of parameters led to path modeling with indices as indicators. In accordance with standard representation, we depicted the observed variables as rectangles. For simplification, error terms and covariance between exogenous variables were omitted from the figure. The model included two endogenous variables at the same time (exclusionist political attitudes toward NJIs and toward PCIs) and ten exogenous variables (three sources of perceived threats for each out-group and four covariate socio-demographic and political variables¹⁰). In line with existing arguments and findings as discussed earlier, as well as our own preliminary data, we allowed for correlations between all exogenous variables, as well as between the two endogenous ones. The calculated

Table 2
Bivariate Correlations between the Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Exclusionist political attitudes NJI	—										
2. Security threat NJI	.51***	—									
3. Economic threat NJI	.34***	.32***	—								
4. Symbolic threat NJI	.48***	.58***	.37***	—							
5. Exclusionist political attitudes PCI	.66***	.41***	.24***	.41***	—						
6. Security threat PCI	.46***	.44***	.35***	.47***	.60***	—					
7. Economic threat PCI	.42***	.44***	.43***	.45***	.49***	.55***	—				
8. Symbolic threat PCI	.32***	.47***	.25***	.42***	.46***	.50***	.40***	—			
9. Religiosity level	.43***	.35***	.19***	.41***	.46***	.40***	.31***	.22***	—		
10. Political orientation (left)	-.47***	-.34***	-.20***	-.37***	-.58***	-.47***	-.48***	-.37***	-.48***	—	
11. Educational attainment	-.26***	-.16***	-.08	-.13***	-.23***	-.16***	-.15***	-.19***	-.10*	.25***	—
12. Income level	-.20***	-.20***	-.03	-.17***	-.17***	-.10*	-.17***	-.14***	-.24***	.11*	.28***

Note: PCIs = native Palestinian citizens of Israel; NJIs = non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union.
 *Significant at the $p < .05$ level. ***Significant at the $p < .0001$ level (two-tailed significance).

Table 3
Regression Weights and Fit Measures of the
Structural Model

	Standardized Regression Weight		Fit Measures	
	Effects on Exclusionist Political Attitudes NJIs	Effects on Exclusionist Political Attitudes PCIs		
Political orientation (left)	-.21***	-.28***	$\chi^2(df)$	10.74 (6) $p = .09$
Religiosity level	.15***	.16***	NFI	.99
Educational attainment	-.11**	-.06	NNFI	.97
Income level	-.05	-.01	CFI	.99
Symbolic threat	.12**	.16***	RMSEA	.04
Economic threat	.15***	.10**	$\chi^2(df)$	10.74 (6) $p = .09$
Security threat	.22***	.23***		
R^2	43%	52%		

Note: PCIs = native Palestinian citizens of Israel; NJIs = non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union. NFI = normed fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index; CFI = confirmatory fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

Significant at the $p < .01$ level. *Significant at the $p < .001$ level.

model presents an excellent fit to the data. Further scrutiny shows that the model explains high levels of explained variance in exclusionist political attitudes toward PCIs (52 percent) and NJIs (43 percent). Of fourteen tested effects, eleven were highly significant; and of forty-six specified correlations, only two did not prove significant: those between economic threat from NJIs, on one hand, and education and income, on the other.

Curiously, in regard to the relative impact of threat sources on the dependent variables, the model shows similar patterns for both very distinct groups (of immigrants and ethnic minorities). A comparison of the two submodels reveals that, despite different levels of exclusion, as well as varying levels of threats, the patterns for prediction are similar though not identical. Perceived security threats are prominent predictors of exclusionist political attitudes toward PCIs and NJIs, while symbolic and economic threats trail behind. One interpretation is that people are willing to put up with threats to their country's economy, and even to the way they live their lives (e.g., habits, customs), but not to the security of their state. Our findings indicate that, despite the dissimilarity in the threats that each group poses in the eyes of the majority group, exclusionist political attitudes are derived from the same (security) threats.

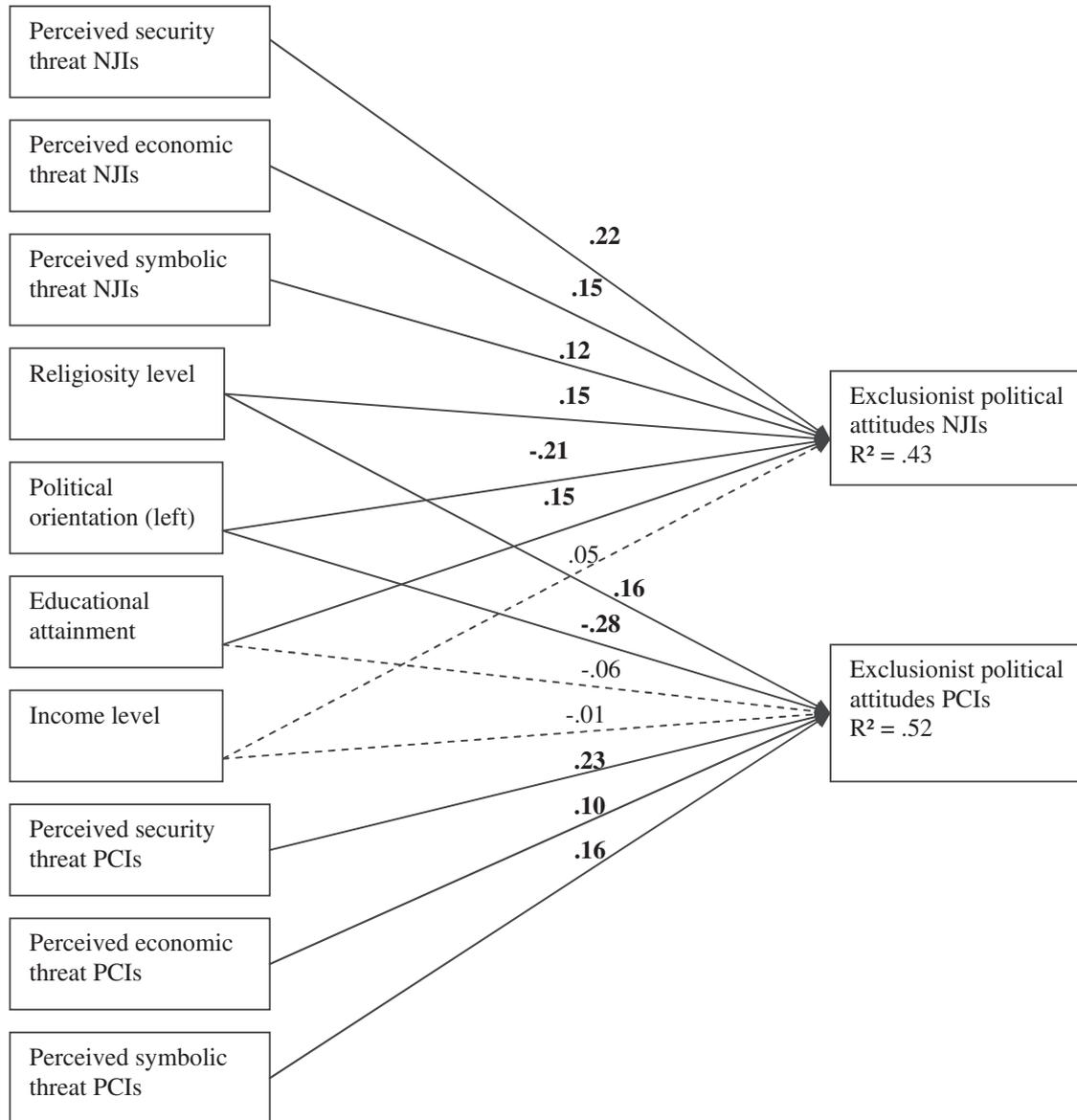
As for the impact of sociopolitical variables, in both cases—in line with our expectations—political orientation and religiosity have the strongest impact (rightists and the religious tend toward more exclusionism), while in predicting exclusionist political attitudes toward ethnic minorities (PCIs), educational attainment and income level have no significant impact. On the other hand, findings show that educational attainment has a minor but significant impact on exclusionary political attitudes toward NJIs.

Discussion and Implications

The primary goal of this project was to study the distinct roles of different types of threat perceptions in inciting exclusionism. We found that majority group members clearly differentiate between the different types of perceived threats posed by immigrants and those posed by an ethnic minority. While the immigrant minority group (NJIs) is perceived by the majority group mainly as an economic and symbolic threat, the ethnic minority group (PCIs) is perceived mainly as a security threat and, to a minor extent, an economic threat. In addition, we found that all three sources of threat induce, at least to some extent, exclusionist political attitudes toward both groups. Yet, and even more interestingly, we have found similar patterns regarding the role played by each threat source in predicting exclusionist political attitudes toward both minority groups. The analysis reveals that a security threat is much more significant than other sources of threat in predicting negative political attitudes toward both minority groups.

The current theoretical dispute focuses on examining the different roles of symbolic threats vis-à-vis realistic threats in the evolvment of antiminority political attitudes (Legge 1996; Pedahzur and Yishai 1999; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004). Lately, the role of symbolic threat has been highlighted due to the increasing importance of cultural issues in the relationships between immigrants and host societies and due as well to the creation of new ethnic minorities. Recent studies in Europe have shown that symbolic threat is more significant than economic threat in predicting negative attitudes toward minorities (Esses et al. 2001; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004; Citrin and Sides forthcoming). Traditionally, realistic threats have focused on economic threat and were often studied in the context of racial discrimination in the United States (Sherif

Figure 1
Results of the Structural Model



Note: PCIs = native Palestinian citizens of Israel; NJIs = non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Bold entries are significant effects. All coefficients correspond with the arrows beneath them.

1966; Levine and Campbell 1972). The role of newer realistic threats has been studied very recently in the wake of terror events that were engineered for the most part by members of different minority groups (Huddy et al. 2002; Huddy 2003; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004; Huddy et al. 2005). We have labeled this terror-related threat a security threat. In light of the current salience of actual terror or threat of terror, and in line with recent argumentation and findings (e.g., Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004), we suggest that security threats must be incorporated into any analytical framework of threat perceptions.

Theoretically, combining symbolic and realistic threats in one explanatory model is imperative to determine the sources of threat perception by majority groups in different societies. We suggest that an integrative examination of the different kinds of threats—realistic (security and economic) and symbolic (cultural)—can reveal their relative impact on politics. This explanatory structure derives from the understanding that while the different sources of threat are closely related, as Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior (2004) have succinctly pointed out, they are still distinct concepts. In its nature, intensity, causes,

and even consequences, a threat to physical security is different from a threat to a group's way of life or economic resources. All three kinds of threat are plausible; they are not mutually exclusive. However, in predicting exclusionist political attitudes, the ability to determine a hierarchy of threats is key to understand the roots of that phenomenon. Hence, we chose to examine the explanatory model in reference to two distinct out-groups that pose different sources of threats to the majority group. The fact that the results reveal a clear hierarchy among the threats in predicting exclusionist political attitudes toward both groups, despite the dissimilarity of the groups, strengthens the reliability of the findings.

Generally speaking, the findings regarding the substantial impact of the security threat in predicting antidemocratic and political exclusionist attitudes concur with previous empirical studies conducted in the United States following the 9/11 terror attacks (Rudolph 2003; Davis and Silver 2004) as well as in other places such as Taiwan (Wang and Chang 2006). Yet the fact that previous studies did not compare the effect of the security threat to other sources of threat prompts the question as to why the hierarchy of threats predicting exclusionism for the two out-groups we examined is so consistent. We would like to suggest some possible explanations.

Our first explanation stems from the interrelation between social identity theory and realistic group conflict theory in understanding the motivations for human behavior. Social identity theory emphasizes group identity, while realistic conflict stresses competition for material resources. These explanations for human behavior are neither mutually exclusive nor incongruous; people behave both in the realistic and in the normative spheres. Yet when facing different sources of threat, human behavior can be explained according to the hierarchy of human needs. We embrace Gordon and Arian's (2001) call for further research on the implications of threat intensity and suggest viewing theories on threat perception through the prism of the Maslow's (1954) renowned hierarchy of needs. In this theory, Maslow showed that basic human needs, like physical security, are highly significant in determining human behavior. Other needs, including the ones focusing on identity and norms, are important yet less influential than the basic needs in determining behavior.

Maslow's (1954) theory can provide a relevant explanation as to why comparison of the three threats resulted in the prominence of the security threat in predicting exclusionist political attitudes. Applying the theory to our findings, a threat to security is

urgent and immediate, while a threat to a way of life or economic well-being occurs in the future and in most cases does not pose a challenge to that most basic of human needs, physical survival.

The second explanation for the consistency of our findings is based upon the framework of terror-management theory (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon 1986), which predicts that when people's lives are threatened, they cling to protective world-views, seeing their group's beliefs as a path to safety and the "others" as threatening and needing aggressive response (McGregor et al. 1998). It should be noted that terror-management theory itself was a response, not to terrorism, but to the terror felt when people face fear for their mortality. Under such conditions, in-group-out-group distinctions become more defined, and willingness to use extreme political measures against the out-group increases. A large body of research (for a review, see Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg 2003) supports this terror-management theory analysis of intergroup conflict. This suggests that our findings can be generalized to other contexts where conditions of actual or threat of terror exist.

The third explanation could be based upon the specific context of the "threatened" group—Israeli Jews—though it also has broader theoretical implications (see Staub and Bar-Tal 2003). The combination of Jewish history (particularly the Holocaust) and the intractable conflict with the Arab world causes Jews in Israel to perceive themselves as being exposed to a continuous existential threat (Bar-Tal 2000). Studies have found that Jews in Israel feel almost continually threatened by war, by terror, and even by the possibility that Israel will be destroyed (Gordon and Arian 2001). According to Bar-Tal (2000), that feeling of consistent existential threat and fear gives rise to a "siege mentality," a core societal belief that other groups have negative intentions toward the group, which stands alone in a hostile world. As a result of that common belief, even the slightest sense of a security threat could raise an enormous amount of support for the political exclusionism of any out-group.

Following Pettigrew (2003), we argue that this mentality of existential threat and fear can provide the ultimate springboard for societies to withdraw from their basic norms (democracy in the Israeli case) and support much more aggressive and exclusionary attitudes, not just toward the direct source of the threat, but also toward other minorities. Moreover, we also accept Pettigrew's argument that this process is not unique to Israel but can be easily applied to other threatened societies. To establish this argument, however, we need to broaden our perspective to other arenas of

conflict, and especially to other societies (e.g., India) where religion plays an important role (Hunsberger and Jackson 2005). Indeed, that claim is supported by recent findings from the Iraqi arena, in which a highly existential security threat promotes xenophobia not only toward rival groups but also toward outgroups, such as women and homosexuals (Inglehart, Mansoor, and Tessler 2006). Furthermore, to broaden this perspective, we must look not only at other case studies of conflict but also at other immigration-related sources of threat, such as crime, that could be perceived to be the result of immigration (Scheepers, Gijssberts, and Coenders 2002). As much as we would like to do so, we do not have the necessary items to tap this question—namely, we cannot test for the threat of crime in this study sample—but we believe this should be taken into account in future studies.

Before closing, we feel obligated to refer to the finding that exclusionist political attitudes toward NJIs were significantly higher than the ones directed toward PCIs. Although this result is only a side product of our research and not an integral part of the attempt to provide answers to our main research questions, its novelty and counterintuitive character call for potential explanations. One could be that NJIs are non-Jewish newcomers who could be perceived as having no “legitimate” right to equal political rights upon arrival, as compared to the PCIs, who have held Israeli citizenship since the establishment of the state. Yet this explanation has not been investigated, either in our empirical work or in any other study that we know. Non-Jewish immigrants are often portrayed in political rhetoric and in the media as people who have faked their Jewish identities to earn their tickets to the Jewish state (Sheleg 2004). Israeli Arabs, however, are never depicted as buying their way into the Jewish state.

A different explanation lies in the relevance of religion to social identity in general (Campbell 2006), and particularly in the case of the majority. In the eyes of many Israeli Jews, the challenge to the Jewish character of the state is closely related to the threat of its survival as a state (Schueftan 2007). In that way, NJIs may be perceived as a threat to the existence of the Jewish state insofar as they strengthen the “Post-Zionist” wing against the religious-nationalist wing in the battle over Israeli national identity.

All in all, this study contributes to the development of theoretical and practical knowledge regarding the political consequences of perceptions of threat. Recent social science literature has emphasized the need to study intergroup relations outside American and

European societies (Campbell 2003; Henry et al. 2005). This study adds to empirical studies that simultaneously compare threat perceptions toward dissimilar groups. Our comparison of these groups reveals that, despite the fact that each group poses different threats, there is a hierarchy of threats, a hierarchy that is based on their potential to infringe on human needs. This attention to the combination of threats is particularly pertinent in our times in view of rising intergroup conflict, terror, and violence worldwide. We strongly believe that a deeper understanding of the threat perceptions of people of different ethnic origins can lead to the enhanced ability of governments to manage ethnic conflicts, violence, and terrorism. Understanding perceptions of threat and hostility will aid in the development of tools for alleviating fears and thus reduce negative political attitudes among different groups of society.

Notes

1. To sharpen the distinctions between threat sources in our study, control for the influence of sociopolitical factors on negative political attitudes is called for. By and large, the extant literature reveals that low socioeconomic status, rightist political orientation, and orthodox religious orientation are positively related to intolerance and exclusionist and xenophobic attitudes toward minorities (Hjrem 2001; Scheepers, Gijssberts, and Coenders 2002). As we proceed through this article, we will detail the ways we controlled for these variables.

2. One recent example for this institutional discrimination is the “Citizenship Law, 2002,” the constitutionality of which the Supreme Court approved in 2006. This law restricts the right of citizens for family unification with residents of the Palestinian territories. While the law includes all the citizens of Israel, it is practically aimed for native Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCIs), since Jews rarely ever marry with Palestinians.

3. However, during the current Al-Aqsa Intifada (excluding the October 2000 events), just as in the first Intifada, PCIs may be generally characterized as “fans and not as players” (Suleiman Shakur, Yedioth Aharonoth, December 2, 1988, cited in Smooha 1989, xvii). The number of Israeli Arabs actually involved in terrorism has grown significantly, but the absolute numbers are relatively miniscule (Shamir and Sagiv-Schifter 2006).

4. In Israel there is only partial separation between church and state; hence, on numerous issues religious law (*halakhah*) [o] prevails. This paradoxical situation has a direct effect on these immigrants in that their Judaism is often questioned by the religious authorities. It also leads to conflict with the host society. For instance, although they were brought to Israel based on their Judaism, are citizens of the state of Israel, and may see themselves as holding Jewish identity (Al-Haj 2004), they cannot marry via formal Jewish institutions in Israel.

5. Unlike the many empirical studies with reference to Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union (NJIs), studies with specific reference to NJIs are nowhere to be found. Hypothesis 1 was based on existing studies showing that exclusionary attitudes toward NJIs were moderate in comparison to attitudes toward PCIs.

6. This technique was the best way to exclude NJI family members from the sample without asking them directly about their Jewish affiliation, a sensitive question that might put an end to the interview.

7. This compared favorably with studies in the United States, especially since the dialing methods in Israel, unlike in the United States, include business phones that must then be treated as failed attempts (Schuster et al. 2001; Galea et al. 2002).

8. Three considerations have led to the inclusion of these four sociodemographic covariates—political orientation, religiosity level, educational attainment, and income level: (1) they play a prominent role in the theoretical literature on intergroup relations; (2) they are very common in similar studies on political aspects of exclusion; and (3) they were found to play key roles in preliminary analyses, particularly political orientation and religiosity level (complete results are available upon request from the authors).

9. Structural equation modeling (SEM) often serves similar purposes to multiple regressions, but is commonly perceived as providing better control for several known shortcomings associated with the regression method (the following references, together with others, might serve as a good introduction to the use and benefits of SEM: Bentler and Chou 1988; Bollen 1989; Mueller 1996).

10. We have decided to specify political orientation as independent of exclusionist political attitudes based on numerous studies (e.g., Semyonov, Raijman, and Gorodzeisky 2006) that introduce right-left political orientation as independent of exclusionist attitudes regarding denying or granting rights to outgroups, as well as our own additional analyses. Note that given the cross-cultural nature of our data set, we cannot reliably test for causality.

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