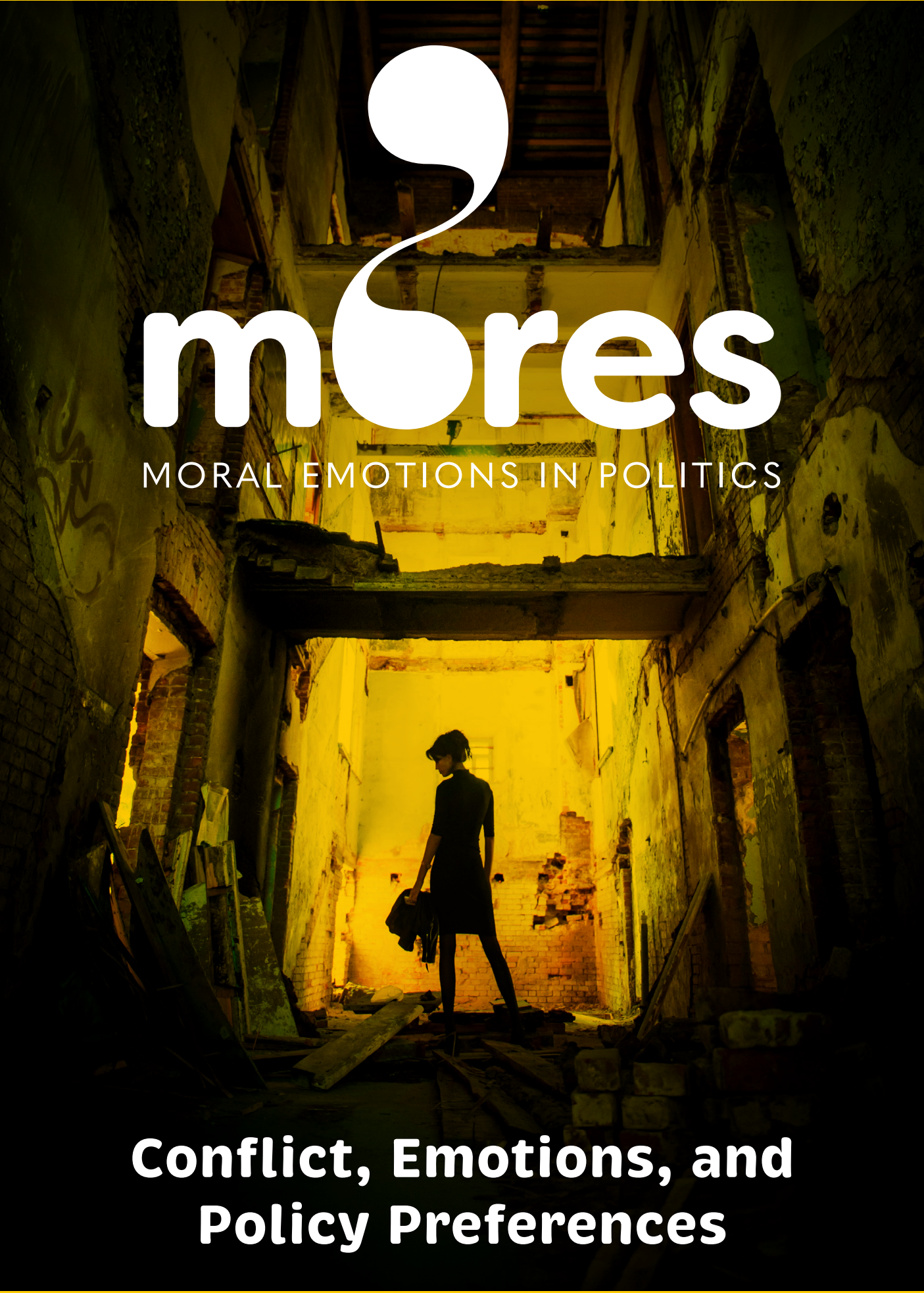




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MORAL EMOTIONS IN POLITICS

Conflict, Emotions, and Policy Preferences

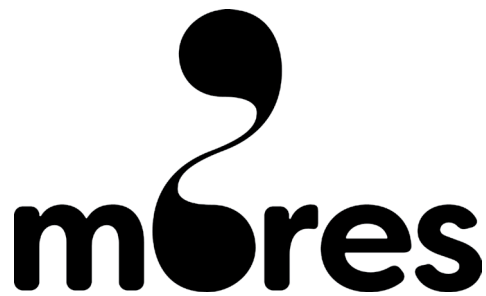
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WORKING PAPER SERIES



MORAL EMOTIONS IN POLITICS: HOW THEY UNITE, HOW THEY DIVIDE

Paper title: Conflict, Emotions, and Policy Preferences. How intergroup feelings shape support for peace and punishment across 12 active and post-conflict societies

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Abstract

How do emotions shape public support for conflict-related policies, and when do they matter most? This working paper examines six intergroup emotions—hope, fear, anger, guilt, hate, and empathy—in predicting policy support for peacebuilding, security, reparation, exclusion, and aggression across 12 active and post-conflict societies.

The analysis uses survey data from 14,440 respondents in the Emotions and Norms in Conflicts project and multilevel regression models. Fear is the clearest predictor of support for security, and hate for exclusion and aggression. On the conciliatory side the picture is less specific: hope is the strongest predictor not only of compromise and future-oriented policies but also of reconciliation, humanitarian aid and equality, while empathy's largest effect falls on reparation.

The results also point to two broader emotional orientations. Hope, guilt, and empathy cluster on the conciliatory side, while hate, anger, and fear cluster on the hostile side. Yet, these clusters are not rigid: emotional effects spill across policy categories, especially for hate, hope, and empathy. Context matters, too. Conflict stage is the strongest moderator: fear and guilt are more strongly associated with policy preferences in post-conflict settings, while hope matters more in active conflicts. Intergroup norms and perceived outgroup emotions usually weaken the effect of personal emotions, suggesting that an individual's own feelings are filtered through social expectations and group context.

Overall, the paper shows that emotions are not just responses to conflict. They are political forces that shape support for peace, justice, security, and exclusion, and their influence changes with the conflict's own life cycle.

Keywords: Intergroup Emotions Theory, Emotion-Policy Specificity, Conflict-Related Policy Preferences, Emotional Norm, Conflict Stage, Cross-National Survey

1. Introduction

We explore whether the emotion-policy specificity pattern holds robustly across 12 conflict contexts and what moderates emotion-policy links

Intergroup violent conflicts remain one of the gravest challenges facing humanity, exacting severe costs on the physical and mental health of individuals while generating far-reaching global consequences for economic stability and social cohesion (e.g., HIIK, 2023). By the end of 2024, the number of forcibly displaced persons reached a historic high of 123.2 million, an increase of 7 million from the previous year, reflecting the intensification of conflicts worldwide (e.g., HIIK, 2024; UNHCR, 2025). Alongside these material consequences, intergroup conflicts profoundly alter the psychological landscape of those involved, shaping their perceptions, emotions, and behaviour in ways that can either entrench or help resolve ongoing hostilities (e.g., Bohm, Rusch & Baron, 2020).

A central psychological pathway through which conflicts shape attitudes and behaviour is group-based emotions. People experience emotions not only on the basis of personal encounters, but also on behalf of social groups to which they belong and with which they identify (e.g., Mackie, Smith & Ray, 2008; Niedenthal & Brauer, 2012). These group-based emotions, including hate, anger, fear, empathy, guilt, and hope, motivate distinct and theoretically predictable forms of conflict-related policy support and behavioural responses (e.g., Halperin, 2015; Halperin & Tagar, 2017). Hate, rooted in the appraisal of an outgroup as irredeemably evil, predicts support for policies of expulsion and eradication (e.g., Fischer, Halperin, Canetti & Jasini, 2018; Halperin, 2008). Anger, arising from the perception of outgroup actions as unjust, can motivate confrontation and even aggression (e.g., Berkowitz, 1989; Frijda, 1986). Fear, elicited by perceived threat, promotes security-oriented and defensive policies (e.g., Haner et al., 2019). Conversely, empathy for outgroup members encourages humanitarian policy support and positive intergroup attitudes (e.g., Dovidio, Saguy & Shnabel, 2009; Brown & Cehajic, 2008). Guilt, generated by acknowledgement of ingroup wrongdoing, motivates support for reparative

Little is known about the moderating conditions under which emotion-policy associations are strengthened or attenuated

policies (e.g., Brown et al., 2008; Wohl, Branscombe & Klar, 2006). Hope, as a future-oriented emotion, fosters problem-solving and support for political compromise (e.g., Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Porat & Bar-Tal, 2014; Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp & Gross, 2014).

While studies have established the connection between emotions and support for specific policies and behaviours, this has yet to be examined uniformly and comparatively across six emotions and diverse contexts in conflict. In the current study, we examine whether discrete intergroup emotions (hope, fear, anger, guilt, hate, empathy) predict their theoretically linked conflict policies more strongly than non-linked policies. Drawing on Intergroup Emotions Theory (IET; e.g., Mackie et al., 2000; Smith, 1993), we expect each emotion to show a unique and specific association with its corresponding policy domain.

Beyond emotions, scholars have increasingly recognised the importance of meta-processes, specifically, how individuals perceive what members of the opposing group feel towards them and their group, as a further determinant of conflict-related attitudes (e.g., Gottman, Katz & Hooven, 1997; Kteily, Hodson & Bruneau, 2016; Nir, Nassir, Hasson & Halperin, 2023). These perceived outgroup emotions, or meta-emotions, can be particularly consequential in contexts of violent conflict where direct contact between adversarial groups is scarce and information is often filtered through biased media narratives. Positive meta-emotions may foster conciliatory attitudes, whereas negative meta-emotions engender a sense of threat and tend to promote defensive or aggressive orientations (e.g., Cohen-Chen, Crisp & Halperin, 2017; Mackie & Smith, 2018; Pauketat, Mackie & Tausch, 2020). In the Israeli-Palestinian context, for instance, perceived Palestinian hope among Jewish Israelis was found to increase acceptance of a peace agreement (e.g., Cohen-Chen, Crisp & Halperin, 2017).

A third socially embedded dimension of emotional influence in conflict concerns emotion norms, that is, individuals' perceptions of the prevalence or desirability of emotions within their own group (e.g., Hochschild, 1979; Thoits, 2004; Vishkin, Kitayama & Tamir, 2023). Drawing on the broader social-psychological literature demonstrating that perceived social norms are drivers of social and political change (e.g., Tankard & Paluck, 2016), recent work has shown that emotion norms predict conflict-related policy support directly and, indirectly, via their effects on personal emotions (e.g., Penic, Mostovoy & Halperin, 2024). Crucially, the salience of the reference group matters: norms perceived in one's political ingroup have been found to be stronger and more consistent predictors of policy attitudes than norms in the broader national group, a finding consistent with the deep affective polarisation documented in conflict-affected societies such as Israel (e.g., Har-el, Maoz & Halperin, 2020; Penic et al., 2024). The mechanisms underlying these normative effects include both internalisation, whereby exposure to shared group emotion leads individuals to adopt that emotion as their own through emotional self-stereotyping (e.g., Moons, Leonard, Mackie & Smith, 2009), and more instrumental normative conformity aimed at avoiding social disapproval (e.g., Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).

Despite the substantial body of work establishing the role of emotions in



“ Conflict stage did more work than any other moderator we tested. Where a conflict sits in its own life cycle changes which emotions carry political weight ”

Mabelle Kretchner

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driving conflict-related policy preferences, several gaps remain. Most extant research has examined these associations within single conflict contexts, raising questions about generalisability across different types of conflicts and cultural settings. Furthermore, relatively little is known about the moderating conditions under which emotion-policy associations are strengthened or attenuated. Political ideology, ingroup emotional (descriptive and prescriptive) norms, meta-emotions, and conflict stage (active vs. post-conflict) represent theoretically motivated candidates for such moderation (e.g., Penic et al., 2024; Harel, Maoz & Halperin, 2020), yet they have rarely been examined together or cross-nationally. Building on Intergroup Emotions Theory (IET; e.g., Mackie, Devos & Smith, 2000; Smith, 1993), the present work package (WP4) addresses these gaps by examining (1) whether the emotion-policy specificity pattern holds robustly across 12 conflict contexts spanning both active and post-conflict settings; and (2) the extent to which political ideology, ingroup emotional norms, perceived outgroup emotions, and conflict stage moderate these emotion-policy links.

The above highlights that several contextual and individual-difference factors are likely to shape the strength of emotion-policy associations. Political ideology may orient individuals towards different policy priorities and amplify specific emotional pathways. Ingroup emotional norms, i.e. what group members typically feel (descriptive norms) and what they believe they should feel (prescriptive norms), can either legitimise or constrain the translation of personal emotions into policy preferences. Meta-emotions, that is, beliefs about what the outgroup feels, add an intergroup dimension: perceiving the outgroup as threatening may intensify fear-driven policy support. Finally, whether the conflict is active or has ended likely alters which emotions carry the greatest political weight. Together, we will examine these moderators and test whether they capture how emotional influences on policy are embedded within broader ideological, normative, and contextual structures.

People feel emotions not just personally, but also through their groups, influencing specific, predictable policies

To this end, this research draws on Wave 1 of the Emotions and Norms in Conflicts Project (ENP), a cross-sectional survey administered to 14,440 participants across 12 conflict contexts, including post-conflict settings (Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia) and active conflict settings (Thailand, Israel, Turkey, Ukraine, Colombia, India). This large-scale, cross-national design affords sufficient statistical power to detect moderating effects of conflict stage and to test the generalisability of the emotion-policy specificity model with unprecedented breadth. Six discrete emotions (hope, fear, anger, guilt, hate, empathy) and twelve policy domains are assessed, along with multiple moderator variables including political ideology, descriptive and prescriptive ingroup emotional norms, and meta-emotions, enabling a comprehensive and integrative test of the theoretical framework.

2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

One emotion, one policy? Testing the specificity claim, and the conditions that bend it

This research investigates how intergroup emotions predict support for conflict-related policies across 12 conflict contexts worldwide. We examine whether each discrete emotion predicts its theoretically corresponding policy domain more strongly than non-linked policies. We further test whether political ideology, perceived ingroup emotional norms, meta-emotions (i.e., perceived outgroup emotions), and conflict stage (i.e., active vs. post-conflict settings) moderate these relationships.

Research Question 1: Emotion–Policy Specificity

Do discrete intergroup emotions (hope, fear, anger, guilt, hate, empathy) predict their theoretically linked conflict policies more strongly than non-linked policies? Drawing on the Intergroup Emotions Theory (IET; Mackie et al., 2000; Smith, 1993), we expect each emotion to show a unique and specific association with its corresponding policy domain.

- **Hypothesis 1a.** Hope will be most strongly associated with support for compromise and future-oriented policies.
- **Hypothesis 1b.** Fear will be most strongly associated with support for security policies and suppression of ingroup criticism.
- **Hypothesis 1c.** Anger will be most strongly associated with support for aggression and retributive justice.

We expected each feeling to have a unique mark: hope for compromise, fear for security, anger for aggression, guilt for repair, hate for exclusion, empathy for aid

- **Hypothesis 1d.** Guilt will be most strongly associated with support for reparation policies.
- **Hypothesis 1e.** Hate will be most strongly associated with support for exclusionary policies.
- **Hypothesis 1f.** Empathy will be most strongly associated with support for humanitarian and reconciliation policies.

Research Question 2: Moderators

Although the direct emotion–policy links are well grounded in theory, several contextual and individual-difference factors are likely to shape their strength. Political ideology may orient individuals towards different policy priorities and amplify specific emotional pathways. Ingroup emotional norms—both what group members typically feel (descriptive norms) and what they believe they *should* feel (prescriptive norms)—can either legitimise or constrain the translation of personal emotions into policy preferences. Meta-emotions, that is, beliefs about what the outgroup feels, add an intergroup dimension: perceiving the outgroup as threatening may intensify fear-driven policy support. Finally, whether the conflict is active or has ended likely alters which emotions carry the greatest political weight. Together, these moderators capture how emotional influences on policy are embedded within broader ideological, normative, and contextual structures.

To what extent do the following factors moderate the emotion–policy association?

Group norms, beliefs about the other side, and the stage of the conflict all had a claim to matter in our analysis

- **RQ2a. Political Ideology.** Does left–right political orientation moderate which emotions most strongly predict policy preferences?
- **RQ2b. Ingroup Emotional Norms.** Does the congruence between personal emotions and perceived ingroup emotional norms (descriptive and prescriptive) strengthen the emotion–policy link? We hypothesise that when personal emotions align with group norms, they will be more strongly associated with corresponding policy preferences.
- **RQ2c. Meta-Emotions (Perceived Outgroup Emotions).** Do perceptions of outgroup emotions amplify or attenuate the personal emotion–policy link? For instance, perceiving the outgroup as angry or hateful may strengthen the personal fear–security policy association.
- **RQ2d. Conflict Stage.** Does the distinction between active and post-conflict settings moderate the emotion–policy relationship? Emotions such as fear may be more strongly linked to security policies in active conflicts.

3. Method

A survey with 14,440 people, from Kosovo to Colombia—the widest cross-national test of the theory to date

Participants and Design

The data come from Wave 1 of the Emotions and Norms in Conflicts Project (ENP; Zahreddine et al., 2026a), a cross-sectional survey conducted across 12 conflict contexts in both post-conflict and ongoing conflict settings. The 12 country/conflict contexts are: Kosovo (Albanians in Kosovo), Northern Ireland (Catholics and Protestants), Serbia (Serbs), Croatia (Croats), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosniaks and Serbs), Ethiopia (Tigray and Amhara), Thailand (Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists), Israel (Jewish Israelis), Turkey (Turks), Ukraine (Ukrainians), Colombia (other Colombians), and India (Hindus and Muslims). Participants were adults (18+) who identified as members of one of the relevant conflict group(s) in their country. Respondents who failed attention checks or whose completion time fell outside valid bounds were excluded from analyses. Full details of sampling, fieldwork and cross-national harmonisation are reported in the project methodology report (Zahreddine et al., 2026b).

Post-conflict contexts included Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ethiopia. *Ongoing conflict contexts* included Thailand, Israel, Turkey, Ukraine, Colombia, and India.

Measures

Personal intergroup emotions

Six discrete intergroup emotions were assessed with single items, each rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 6 = *Strongly agree*). The emotions assessed were: hope for improved intergroup relations, fear of the outgroup's actions, anger about the outgroup's actions, guilt for the ingroup's actions, hatred towards the outgroup, and empathy for the outgroup's suffering. All items were anchored to the specific conflict context (e.g., "I feel anger about the actions of [outgroup] in the context of the war/conflict"). Table 1 pre-

Table 1 – Personal Intergroup Emotions and Item Content

EMOTION	ITEM STEM
Hope	I am hopeful that relations between [ingroup] and [outgroup] will improve
Fear	I feel fear of the [outgroup]'s actions in the context of the war/conflict
Anger	I feel anger about the actions of [outgroup] in the context of the war/conflict
Guilt	I feel guilty for the actions of some [ingroup members] against [outgroup members]
Hate	I hate [outgroup] for what they have done to [ingroup] in the war/conflict
Empathy	I feel empathy (compassion) for the suffering of [outgroup] in the context of the war/conflict

Note. All items were rated on a 6-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 6 = Strongly agree).

sents the full item content for each emotion.

Conflict-related policy preferences.

Twelve policy items assessed support for conflict-related policies, each rated on the same 6-point Likert scale. Each policy was measured with one generic item (applicable across all contexts) and one context-specific item. For the primary analyses, we use the generic items to maximise cross-context comparability. The policy domains, along with their theoretically linked emotions, are presented in Table 2.

The 12 policy domains span a range of conflict-relevant orientations: humanitarian aid and reconciliation (linked to empathy), reparation (linked to guilt), better future initiatives and political compromise (linked to hope), exclusion/separation (linked to hate), intergroup aggression and retributive justice (linked to anger), security measures and suppression of ingroup criticism (linked to fear), as well as equality promotion and collective action for equality (not linked to a specific emotion *a priori*). Additional policy items—retributive justice and collective action for equality—were analysed individually because retributive justice targets both ingroup and outgroup perpetrators, and collective action for equality represents behavioural intention rather than policy support.

Policy composites for moderation analyses.

For the moderation analyses (RQ2), we restricted the tests to theoretically

Table 2 – Conflict-Related Policy Domains and Theoretically Linked Emotions

POLICY DOMAIN	THEORETICALLY LINKED EMOTION
Humanitarian aid	Empathy
Reconciliation	Empathy
Reparation	Guilt
Equality promotion	—
Better future initiatives	Hope
Political compromise	Hope
Exclusion/separation	Hate
Intergroup aggression	Anger
Security measures	Fear
Suppress ingroup criticism	Fear
Retributive justice	Anger
Collective action for equality	—

linked emotion–policy pairs to reduce the number of comparisons and sharpen statistical power (see Analytic Strategy). Where multiple policy items shared the same linked emotion, we examined their empirical coherence to determine whether they could be combined into composites. Two pairs demonstrated sufficient internal consistency to justify composite scores: *political compromise* and *better future initiatives* (both linked to hope; Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$, $r = .65$), combined into a *future-oriented compromise* composite; and *humanitarian aid* and *reconciliation* (both linked to empathy; $\alpha = .79$, $r = .65$), combined into a *prosocial reconciliation* composite. Both composites were computed as the mean of their constituent items.

Table 3 – Theoretically Linked Emotion–Policy Pairs and Outcome Operationalisation for Moderation Analyses

EMOTION	OUTCOME LABEL	ITEMS INCLUDED	TYPE	α	r
Hope	Future-oriented compromise	Political compromise + Better future initiatives	Composite	.78	.65
Fear	Security measures	Security measures	Single item	—	—
Fear	Suppression of criticism	Suppress ingroup criticism	Single item	—	—
Anger	Intergroup aggression	Intergroup aggression	Single item	—	—
Guilt	Reparation	Reparation	Single item	—	—
Hate	Exclusion	Exclusion/separation	Single item	—	—
Empathy	Prosocial reconciliation	Humanitarian aid + Reconciliation	Composite	.79	.65

Note. α = Cronbach's alpha; r = Pearson correlation between constituent items. Composites were computed as the mean of the two items. For single-item outcomes, α and r are not applicable. All items rated on a 6-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 6 = *Strongly agree*).

The two fear-linked items—security measures and suppression of ingroup criticism—showed low internal consistency ($\alpha = .30$, $r = .18$) and were retained as separate outcomes, consistent with the conceptual distinction between seeking protection from the outgroup and silencing ingroup dissent. The two anger-linked items—intergroup aggression and retributive justice—were negatively correlated ($r = -.12$) and yielded a negative alpha ($\alpha = -.27$), reflecting the fact that retributive justice targets perpetrators from both groups whereas aggression is directed exclusively at the outgroup. Accordingly, only intergroup aggression was retained as the anger-linked outcome for moderation analyses; retributive justice was excluded from moderation given its ambiguous theoretical link. Guilt (reparation) and hate (exclusion) were each linked to a single policy item and thus entered moderation analyses as individual items. The resulting seven emotion–outcome pairs used for moderation analyses are presented in Table 3.

Moderator variables.

- **Political ideology.** Participants indicated their political group affiliation

on a 7-point scale (1 = *Extreme right* to 7 = *Extreme left*). This measure was administered in seven of the twelve contexts. Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Ethiopia, Thailand, and India used context-specific party lists instead and are excluded from the ideology analysis.

- **Ingroup emotional norms.** Two types of ingroup emotional norms were assessed for all six emotions using 0–100% slider scales. *Descriptive norms* captured the perceived prevalence of each emotion among ingroup members (“How many [ingroup members] feel [emotion]?”). *Prescriptive norms* captured the perceived moral approval of each emotion (“How many [ingroup members] think that it is the right thing to feel [emotion]?”).
- **Meta-emotions (perceived outgroup emotions).** Participants estimated the prevalence of each of the six emotions among outgroup members using 0–100% slider scales (e.g., “How many people among [outgroup] feel [emotion]?”).
- **Conflict stage.** Countries were categorised as post-conflict (Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Ethiopia) or active conflict (Thailand, Israel, Turkey, Ukraine, Colombia, India). Additional conflict-level indicators include years since last violence, peace years, and conflict intensity.

Control variables.

Demographic controls included age, gender, education level, religiosity, and household income relative to the national average.

Analytic Strategy

Data Preparation.

Responses coded as “prefer not to say” were recoded as missing. Participants who failed attention checks or whose completion times were flagged as invalid were excluded. Emotion and policy variables were examined for distributional properties across all 12 contexts.

Software.

All analyses were conducted in R (version 4.3+). Multilevel models were estimated using the *lme4* package (Bates et al., 2015) with *lmerTest* for Satterthwaite degrees of freedom and *p*-values. Simple slopes and Johnson–Neyman intervals were computed using the *interactions* package (Long, 2019). Internal consistency was evaluated with Cronbach’s α via the *psych* package (Revelle, 2024). Effect sizes were computed with the *effectsize* package. Visualisation was done with *ggplot2*.

Primary Analysis

Analysis 1: Emotion–policy specificity (RQ1).

To test whether each discrete emotion preferentially predicts its theoretically linked policy, we fit a series of multilevel regression models (individuals nested



“Most work in this field lives inside a single conflict. Pooling twelve of them let us ask a question you simply can’t ask from one country: does this travel?”

Mabelle Kretchner

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within countries) using restricted maximum likelihood estimation. For each of the 12 policy outcomes, all six personal emotions were entered simultaneously as predictors, controlling for demographic covariates. Country was modelled as a random intercept. Specificity is evaluated descriptively, by comparing the magnitude of each emotion's coefficients across the 12 policy outcomes and the magnitudes of the six emotions within each policy model. Differences between coefficients were not formally tested, so these comparisons are interpreted as patterns rather than as significant contrasts. To address the issue of multiple simultaneous tests, we applied the Bonferroni–Holm correction within each family of comparisons (i.e., within each policy outcome). Both unstandardised (b) and standardised (β) coefficients are reported. The pattern of coefficients across all emotion–policy combinations is presented as a coefficient plot to visualise the specificity pattern.

Analysis 2: Focused moderation (RQ2).

To test moderation, we adopted a focused strategy: rather than testing all possible emotion $\times$ moderator $\times$ policy combinations (which would yield an unwieldy number of tests), moderation was examined only for the seven theoretically linked emotion–policy pairs identified in Table 3. This approach offers two advantages. First, it restricts the number of tests to seven per moderator, yielding 35 total moderation tests across all five moderators—substantially reducing the multiple comparisons burden. Second, it ensures that the moderation tests are theoretically motivated, targeting the emotion–policy associations that are most relevant to the specificity framework.

For each of the seven focused pairs, we estimated a multilevel model in which the focal emotion, the moderator, and their interaction were entered as predictors, along with the remaining five emotions as controls and demographic covariates. Country was modelled as a random intercept. Continuous predictors and moderators were grand-mean centred to reduce multicollinearity. For emotion-specific moderators (descriptive norms, prescriptive norms, meta-emotions), each emotion was paired with its corresponding moderator (e.g., personal anger $\times$ perceived outgroup anger). The Bonferroni–Holm correction was applied across the seven interaction tests within each moderator to control the familywise error rate.

We concentrated on seven principal emotion-policy pairs, examining moderation exclusively for these theoretically connected combinations

Post hoc probing of interactions.

All significant interactions were decomposed using the Johnson–Neyman technique and simple slopes analysis. Simple slopes were computed at $\pm 1 SD$ of the moderator, and regions of significance were identified to determine the range of moderator values over which the focal emotion significantly predicted the policy outcome. For the categorical moderator (conflict stage), simple slopes were computed separately for active and post-conflict settings. Interaction effects are displayed graphically using conditional effects plots showing the predicted policy support as a function of the emotion at low ($-1 SD$), mean, and high ($+1 SD$) levels of the moderator.

4. Results

Fear was the clearest predictor of security policy; on the conciliatory side the pattern was broader, carried mainly by hope.

Participants and Data Screening

The initial dataset comprised 15,270 respondents across 12 conflict contexts. Following exclusion of participants who failed at least one attention check ($n = 150$) or whose completion times fell outside valid bounds ($n = 701$), with some overlap between these criteria, the final analytic sample consisted of $N = 14,440$ participants. Table 4 (*see on p. 15*) presents the sample size and conflict characteristics for each context. Six contexts were classified as post-conflict (Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia) and six as active conflict (Thailand, Israel, Turkey, Ukraine, Colombia, India).

Descriptive Statistics

Personal emotions and policy preferences means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations are presented in Table 5 (*see on p. 16*). Hope, guilt, and empathy were positively correlated with one another ($r_s = .42$ to $.57$) and with the conciliatory policies (humanitarian aid, reconciliation, reparation, equality, better future, compromise), and negatively with exclusion and aggression. Fear, anger, and hate showed the opposite pattern: positive correlations with hostile policies and negative or near-zero correlations with conciliatory ones. Fear was distinctive in showing its strongest policy correlation with security support ($r = .31$). The substantial intercorrelations among emotions (e.g., anger–hate $r = .58$; hope–empathy $r = .50$) motivate the multivariate approach taken in RQ1, where all six emotions are entered simultaneously to isolate each one’s unique contribution.

Figure 1 (*p. 17*) displays the mean emotion profiles by country. The emotional landscape varied substantially across conflict contexts. In Israel and Ukraine, anger and hate were markedly elevated while hope and empathy were suppressed. In Colombia anger and hate were also high, but hope and empathy sat close to the active-conflict average, indicating that the two emotional clusters can move independently of one another. For instance, Ukrainian respondents

Of 35 moderation tests, 15 held after correction, and conflict stage was the strongest moderator, with fear and guilt biting harder in post-conflict settings

Table 4 – Sample characteristics by conflict context

COUNTRY	INGROUP(S)	OUTGROUP(S)	CONFLICT STAGE	N
Kosovo	Albanians in Kosovo	Serbs	Post-conflict	947
Northern Ireland	Catholics / Protestants	Protestants / Catholics	Post-conflict	1,538
Serbia	Serbs	Kosovo Albanians	Post-conflict	950
Croatia	Croats	Serbs	Post-conflict	960
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Bosniaks / Serbs	Serbs / Bosniaks	Post-conflict	1,941
Ethiopia	Tigray / Amhara	Amhara / Tigray	Post-conflict	972
Thailand	Malay Muslims / Thai Buddhists	Thai Buddhists / Malay Muslims	Active	1,011
Israel	Jewish Israelis	Palestinians	Active	1,363
Turkey	Turks	Kurds	Active	964
Ukraine	Ukrainians	Russians	Active	954
Colombia	Other Colombians	Ex-guerrilla members	Active	969
India	Hindus / Muslims	Muslims / Hindus	Active	1,871

Note. Total N = 14,440. In contexts with two ingroups (e.g., Northern Ireland, Bosnia), both subgroups are included.

reported the highest levels of hate ($M = 5.1$) and among the lowest levels of hope ($M = 2.3$) and empathy ($M = 1.8$). A similar pattern characterised Israeli respondents (hate $M = 4.8$, hope $M = 2.4$, empathy $M = 2.1$). In contrast, post-conflict contexts such as Northern Ireland and Ethiopia showed higher hope and empathy alongside lower hate. Thailand stood out as a case where all six emotions were relatively elevated, suggesting high emotional engagement across the board.

Figure 2 (see on p. 18) displays mean policy support separately for post-conflict and active conflict contexts. Conciliatory policies (humanitarian aid, reconciliation, compromise, better future) showed somewhat higher endorsement in post-conflict contexts, while hostile policies (aggression, exclusion) showed the reverse pattern. Security policy support was modestly higher in active conflicts.

Table 5 – Means, SDs, and Correlations of Emotions and Policy Preferences

#	Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1.	<i>Hope</i>	4.15	1.69	—																	
2.	<i>Fear</i>	3.87	1.55	-.08***	—																
3.	<i>Anger</i>	4.33	1.51	-.26***	.54***	—															
4.	<i>Guilt</i>	3.15	1.60	.42***	.03*	-.11***	—														
5.	<i>Hate</i>	3.58	1.70	-.38***	.41***	.58***	-.18***	—													
6.	<i>Emp</i>	3.43	1.61	.50***	-.06***	-.25***	.57***	-.31***	—												
7.	<i>Human</i>	4.75	1.41	.41***	-.10***	-.18***	.31***	-.25***	.36***	—											
8.	<i>Recon</i>	4.63	1.43	.53***	-.08***	-.22***	.37***	-.35***	.48***	.65***	—										
9.	<i>Rep</i>	3.43	1.71	.39***	-.03**	-.21***	.39***	-.22***	.47***	.39***	.51***	—									
10.	<i>Equal</i>	4.43	1.49	.49***	-.09***	-.23***	.39***	-.31***	.47***	.59***	.67***	.48***	—								
11.	<i>Future</i>	4.58	1.41	.54***	-.10***	-.24***	.38***	-.37***	.50***	.52***	.68***	.39***	.69***	—							
12.	<i>Compr</i>	4.21	1.49	.48***	-.09***	-.23***	.37***	-.31***	.46***	.44***	.59***	.44***	.59***	.65***	—						
13.	<i>Excl</i>	3.28	1.70	-.29***	.22***	.28***	-.20***	.38***	-.28***	-.26***	-.33***	-.03**	-.31***	-.37***	-.27***	—					
14.	<i>Aggr</i>	3.26	1.64	-.25***	.22***	.31***	-.19***	.38***	-.27***	-.31***	-.30***	-.09***	-.29***	-.30***	-.22***	.56***	—				
15.	<i>Secu</i>	3.93	1.43	-.09***	.31***	.28***	-.02	.27***	-.11***	.06***	-.03*	.04***	-.00	-.07***	-.04***	.28***	.25***	—			
16.	<i>Critiq</i>	3.83	1.41	.03**	.09***	.07***	.06***	.12***	.04***	.01	.01	.10***	.05***	.03**	.04***	.20***	.20***	.18***	—		
17.	<i>Retri</i>	4.88	1.25	.17***	.00	.01	.12***	-.07***	.13***	.39***	.36***	.18***	.33***	.31***	.25***	-.08***	-.12***	.12***	.04***	—	
18.	<i>CA</i>	3.48	1.65	.36***	-.04***	-.17***	.34***	-.19***	.37***	.39***	.46***	.45***	.53***	.43***	.42***	-.15***	-.12***	.03*	.12***	.19***	—

Note. *N* = 14,440. Variables 1–6 are personal intergroup emotions; variables 7–18 are conflict-related policy preferences. Human = humanitarian aid; Recon = reconciliation; Rep = reparation; Equal = equality promotion; Future = better future initiatives; Compr = political compromise; Excl = exclusion/separation; Aggr = intergroup aggression; Secu = security measures; Critiq = suppress ingroup criticism; Retri = retributive justice; CA = collective action for equality. All variables rated on a 6-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 6 = *Strongly agree*). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (Bonferroni–Holm corrected across all 153 unique pairs).

Emotion–Policy Specificity (RQ1)

To test whether discrete intergroup emotions preferentially predict their theoretically linked policies, we estimated a series of multilevel regression models (individuals nested within countries) with random country intercepts. For each of the 12 policy outcomes, all six emotions were entered simultaneously as predictors, controlling for age, gender, education, religiosity, and income. Bonferroni–Holm correction was applied within each policy model across the six emotion predictors. Figure 3 (*p. 19*) displays the full matrix of unstandardised regression coefficients.

Hope and Future-Oriented Policies (H1a)

Hypothesis 1a was supported, though not exclusively. Hope was the strongest emotional predictor of political compromise ($b = 0.22$, $\beta = .24$, $p < .001$) and better future initiatives ($b = 0.21$, $\beta = .26$, $p < .001$). It was also the strongest predictor of reconciliation ($b = 0.25$, $\beta = .30$, $p < .001$), humanitarian aid ($b = 0.17$, $\beta = .20$, $p < .001$), and equality promotion ($b = 0.18$, $\beta = .20$, $p < .001$). Hope's largest single association was therefore with reconciliation, a policy linked a priori to empathy. Hope predicts compromise and future-oriented policy as hypothesised, but it does so as part of a broad conciliatory orientation rather than a narrow one.



Figure 1. Note. Error bars represent ± 1 SE. All items rated on a 6-point scale.

Fear and Security Policies (H1b)

Supporting Hypothesis 1b, fear was the strongest emotional predictor of security measures ($b = 0.17, p < .001$), with a coefficient substantially larger than for any other emotion on this policy. Fear also showed small but significant associations with exclusion ($b = 0.04, p < .01$) and suppression of criticism ($b = 0.04, p < .05$), though the latter two coefficients were small relative to the security association. Notably, fear was nonsignificant for most conciliatory policies, demonstrating good discriminant validity.

Anger and Aggression (H1c)

Hypothesis 1c received partial support. Anger significantly predicted intergroup aggression ($b = 0.08, p < .001$), but the coefficient was modest and smaller than the effects of hate on the same outcome ($b = 0.17, p < .001$). Anger also predicted security measures ($b = 0.10, p < .001$) and retributive justice ($b = 0.05, p < .001$), while negatively predicting compromise ($b = -0.07, p < .001$) and reparation ($b = -0.11, p < .001$). This suggests that an-

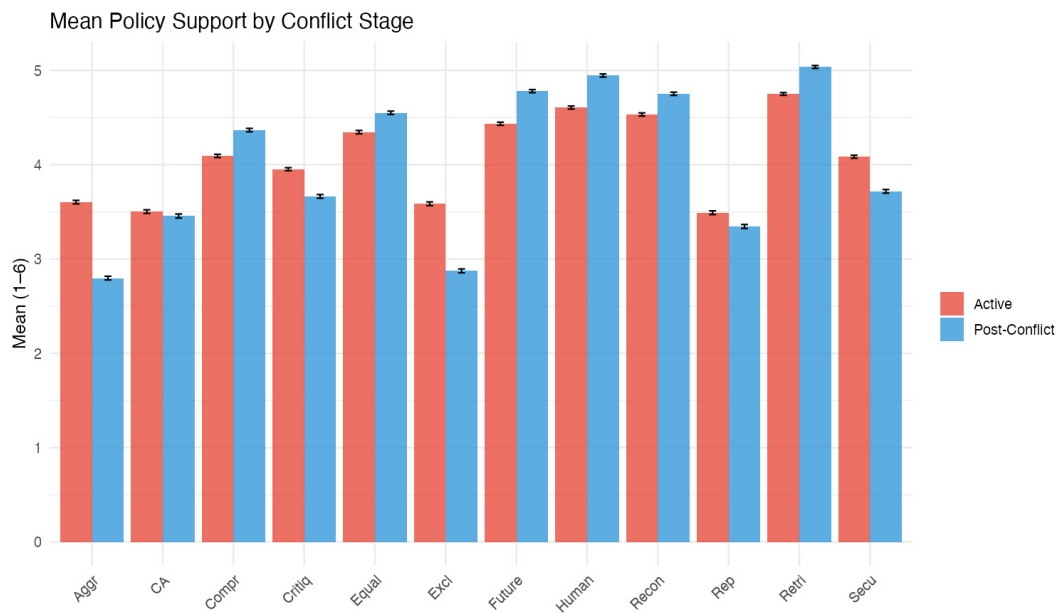


Figure 2. Note. Red = active conflict; blue = post-conflict. Error bars represent ± 1 SE.

ger, rather than being narrowly specific to aggression, contributes to a broad oppositional orientation that supports confrontational policies and undermines conciliatory ones.

Guilt and Reparation (H1d)

Hypothesis 1d was not supported. Guilt predicted reparation ($b = 0.15$, $\beta = .14$, $p < .001$), and reparation was the policy guilt predicted most strongly, but empathy showed a larger coefficient on the same outcome ($b = 0.22$, $\beta = .20$, $p < .001$). Guilt additionally predicted compromise ($b = 0.07$, $p < .001$) and equality ($b = 0.07$, $p < .001$). Reparation is thus guilt's primary target, but guilt is not the dominant predictor of it.

Hate and Exclusion (H1e)

Hypothesis 1e was clearly supported. Hate was the strongest predictor of exclusion ($b = 0.17$, $p < .001$) and intergroup aggression ($b = 0.17$, $p < .001$). Hate also negatively predicted all conciliatory policies, including reconciliation ($b = -0.10$, $p < .001$), better future ($b = -0.09$, $p < .001$), and hope-linked policies. Additionally, hate was the strongest predictor of suppression of ingroup criticism ($b = 0.09$, $p < .001$) and a significant predictor of security policy ($b = 0.09$, $p < .001$). Thus, hate functions as a pervasive predictor

Personal Emotions Predicting Conflict-Related Policy Preferences

Multilevel regression coefficients with 95% CIs; red diamond = theoretically linked pair

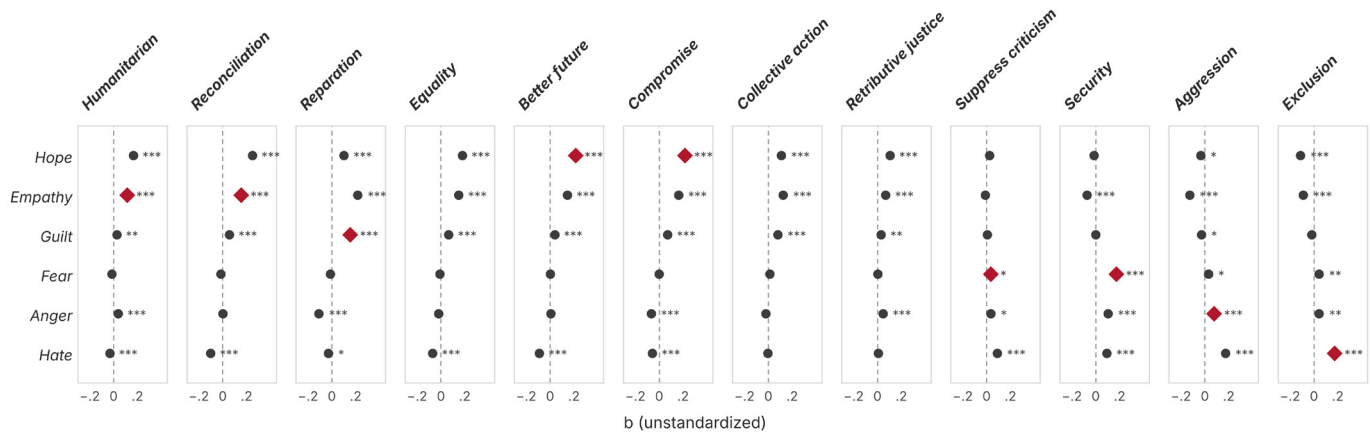


Figure 3. Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, Bonferroni-Holm corrected

that both promotes hostile policies and undermines conciliatory ones.

Empathy and Humanitarian/Reconciliation Policies (H1f)

Hypothesis 1f was not supported. Empathy was the strongest predictor of reparation ($b = 0.22$, $\beta = .20$, $p < .001$), which is guilt's hypothesised outcome, but it was not the strongest predictor of either humanitarian aid ($b = 0.11$, $p < .001$) or reconciliation ($b = 0.16$, $p < .001$), where hope showed larger coefficients ($b = 0.17$ and $b = 0.25$). Empathy was nonetheless the second-strongest predictor of both humanitarian aid and better future initiatives, the latter at $b = 0.15$, $p < .001$. Empathy also negatively predicted aggression ($b = -0.13$, $p < .001$) and exclusion ($b = -0.09$, $p < .001$). Empathy is therefore a consistent conciliatory predictor across the policy set, but its influence is not concentrated on the policies to which it was linked *a priori*.

Summary of Specificity Findings

Overall, the specificity pattern was partially supported, and it held more clearly on the hostile side than on the conciliatory one. Fear showed the clearest specificity, emerging as a strong and relatively unique predictor of security policy. Hate emerged as the dominant predictor of both exclusion and aggression, overlapping substantially with anger's hypothesised domain. Among the conciliatory policies, specificity was weaker. Hope was the strongest predictor of five of the six conciliatory outcomes, including both policies linked to empathy, while empathy's largest effect fell on reparation, the policy linked to guilt. The findings thus support a model in which emotional specificity holds on the hostile side but gives way on the conciliatory side to a broad orientation carried primarily by hope, with empathy and guilt contributing overlapping restorative motivation.

Moderation of Emotion–Policy Associations (RQ2)

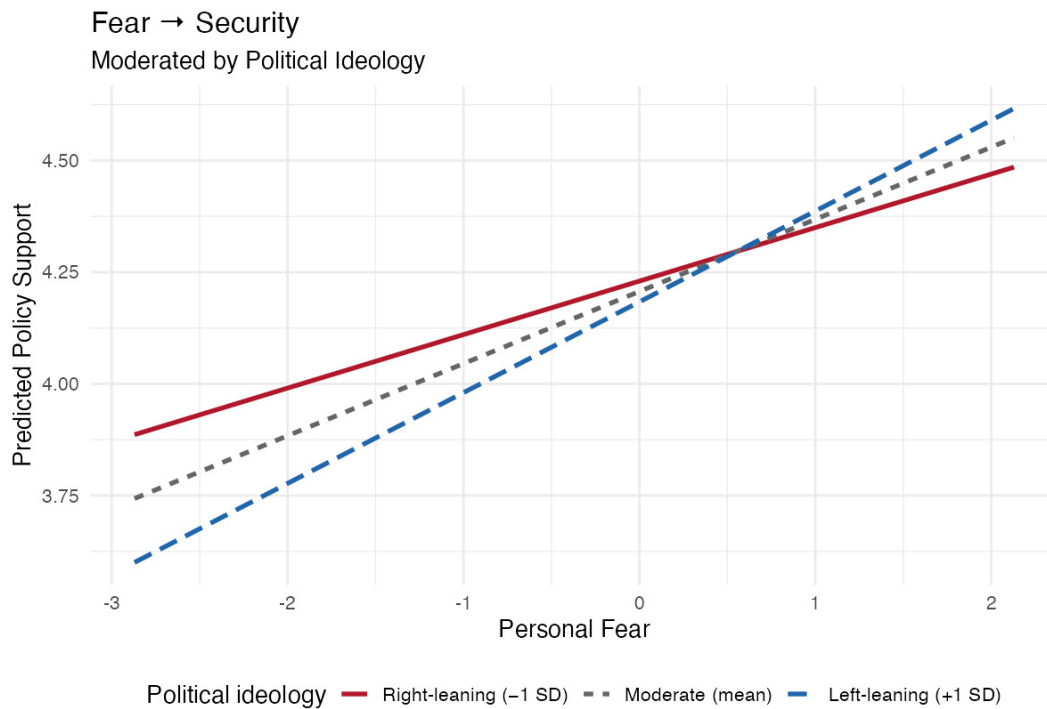


Figure 4.

To test whether contextual and individual-difference factors moderate the emotion–policy associations established in RQ1, we focused on the seven theoretically linked emotion–policy pairs and tested each against five moderators: political ideology (RQ2a), ingroup descriptive norms (RQ2b), ingroup prescriptive norms (RQ2b), perceived outgroup emotions (meta-emotions; RQ2c), and conflict stage (RQ2d). For each moderator, a focal emotion $\times$ moderator interaction term was added to the multilevel model containing all six emotions and demographic controls. Bonferroni–Holm correction was applied within each moderator family (7 tests per moderator, 35 total). Where policy composites were empirically justified (Compromise + Better Future: $\alpha = .78$; Humanitarian + Reconciliation: $\alpha = .79$), averaged composites served as outcomes; otherwise, individual items were retained.

RQ2a: Political Ideology

This analysis is based on the seven contexts that administered the generic ideology scale (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Turkey, Ukraine, and Colombia), approximately $n = 8,100$ participants. Political ideology significantly moderated two of the seven emotion–policy associations

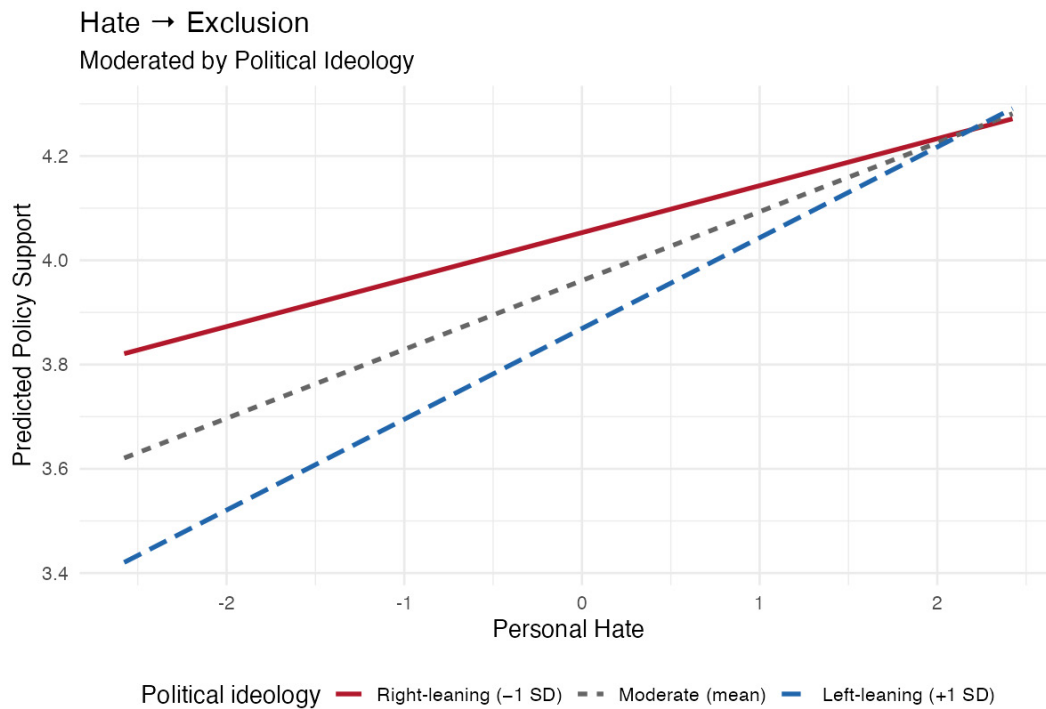


Figure 5.

after Holm correction. The Fear $\times$ Ideology interaction on security policy was significant ($b = 0.032$, $t = 2.98$, $p_{\text{holm}} = .021$). Simple slopes analysis revealed that fear predicted security support across the entire ideological spectrum, but the association was stronger among left-leaning participants ($b = 0.20$ at $+1 SD$) than among right-leaning participants ($b = 0.12$ at $-1 SD$).

The Hate $\times$ Ideology interaction on exclusion was also significant ($b = 0.032$, $t = 2.79$, $p_{\text{holm}} = .032$), with a parallel pattern: hate predicted exclusion more strongly among left-leaning ($b = 0.17$) than right-leaning participants ($b = 0.09$). The remaining five interactions were nonsignificant.

A descriptive check on the two significant interactions revealed evidence consistent with reduced range-of-movement among right-leaning respondents. For exclusion, right-leaning respondents were compressed at the scale ceiling (31.6% scored at the maximum vs. 8.8% of left-leaning respondents) and reported substantially higher baseline hate ($M = 4.50$ vs. 3.20 , $d = 0.76$). For security, the outcome-side ceiling effect was modest (16.0% vs. 11.4% at the maximum), but right-leaning respondents nonetheless reported elevated baseline fear ($M = 4.24$ vs. 3.87 , $d = 0.24$). In both cases, right-leaning respondents began nearer the upper end of the relevant emotion scale, which constrains the range over which incremental increases in fear or hate can shift policy preferences.

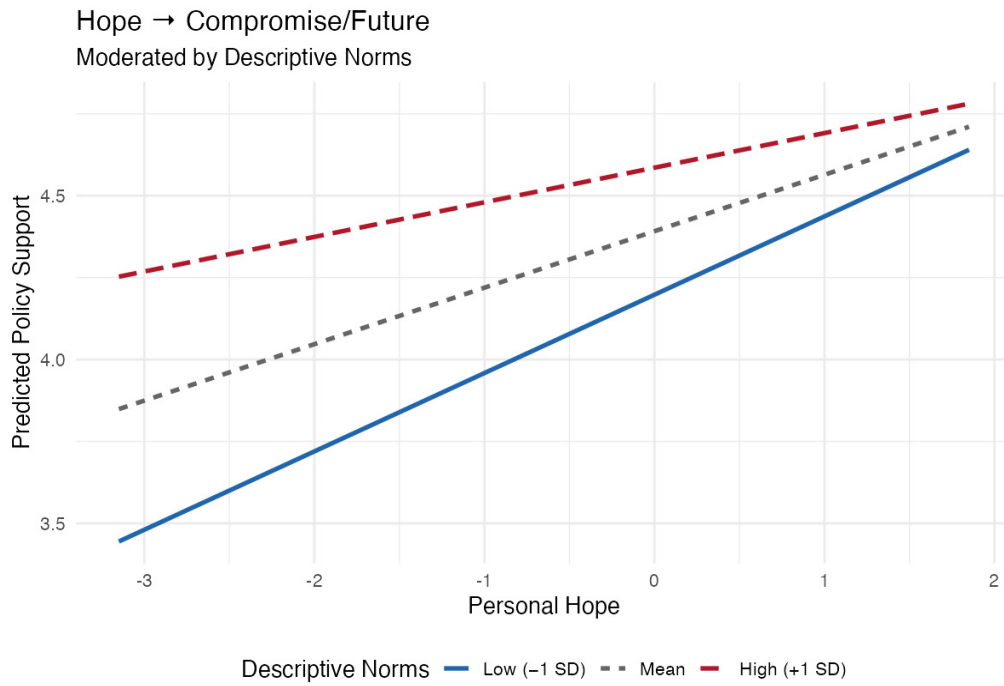


Figure 6.

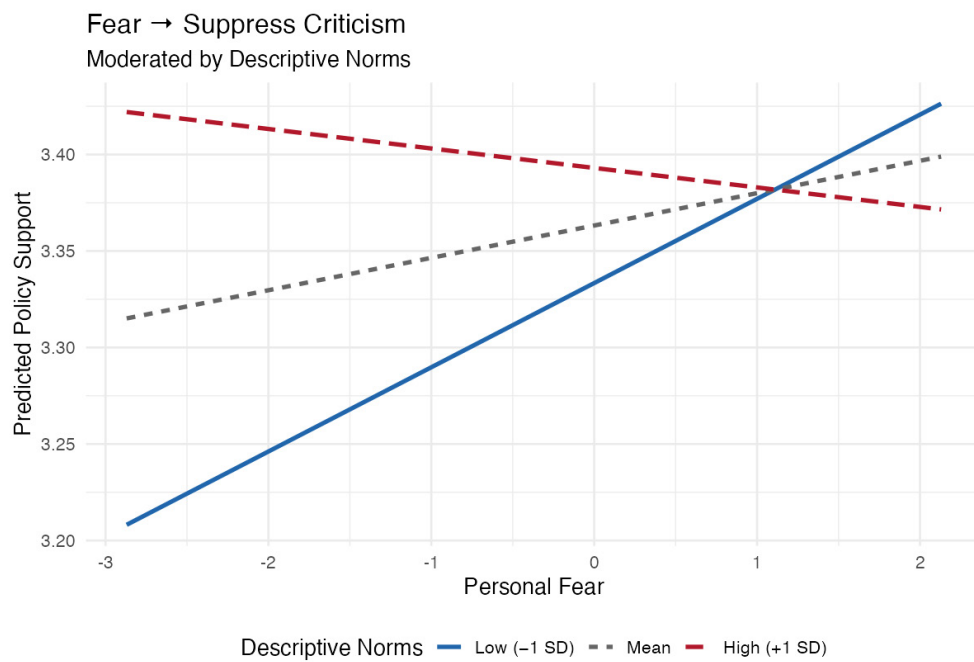
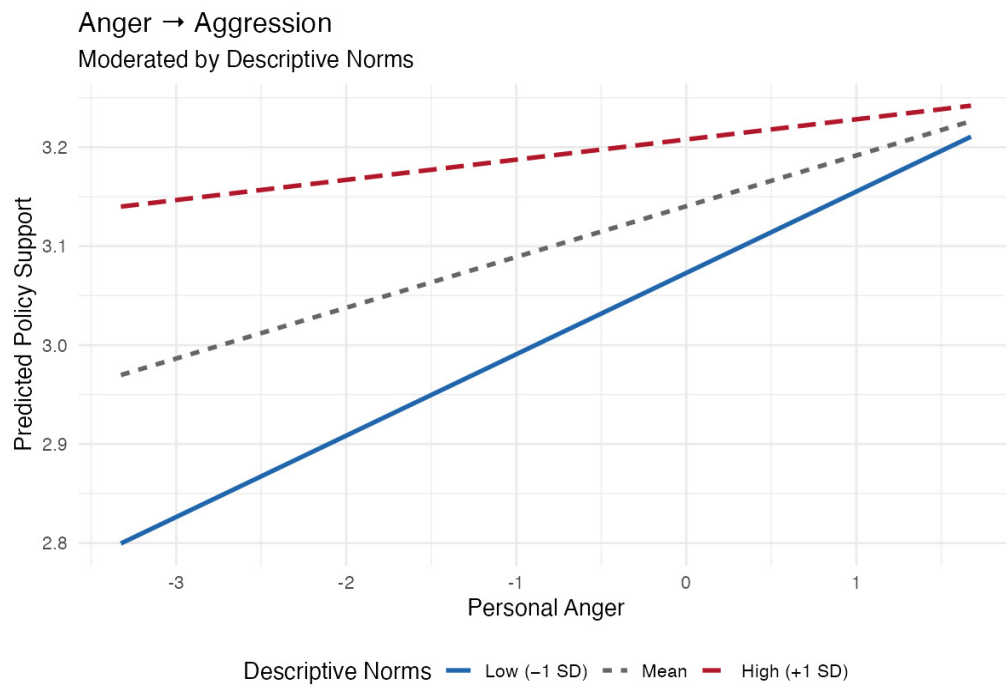
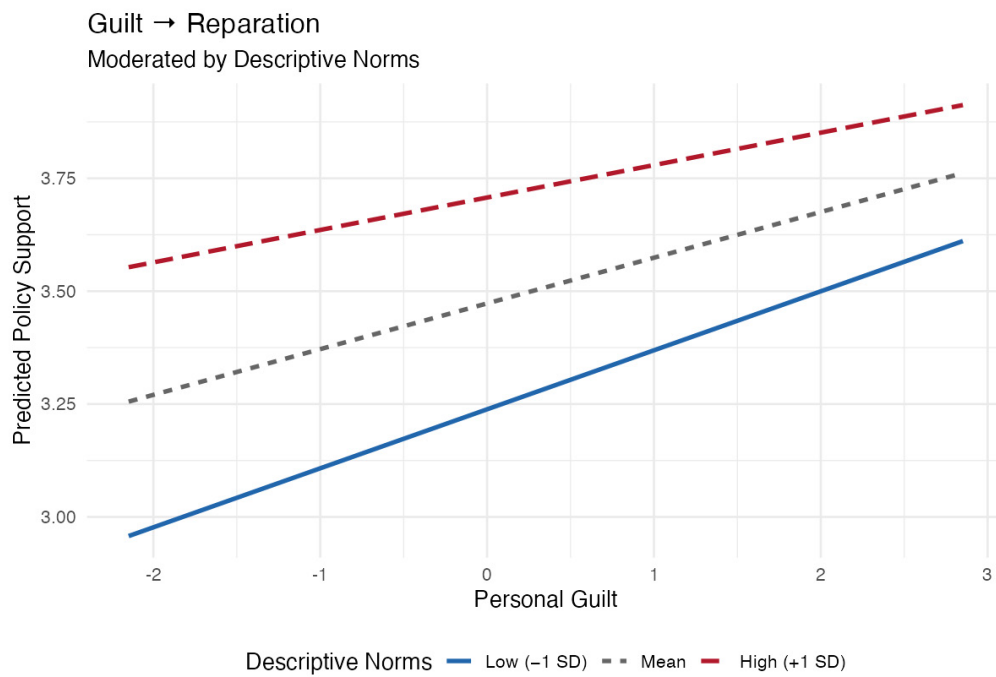


Figure 7.


Figure 8.

Figure 9.

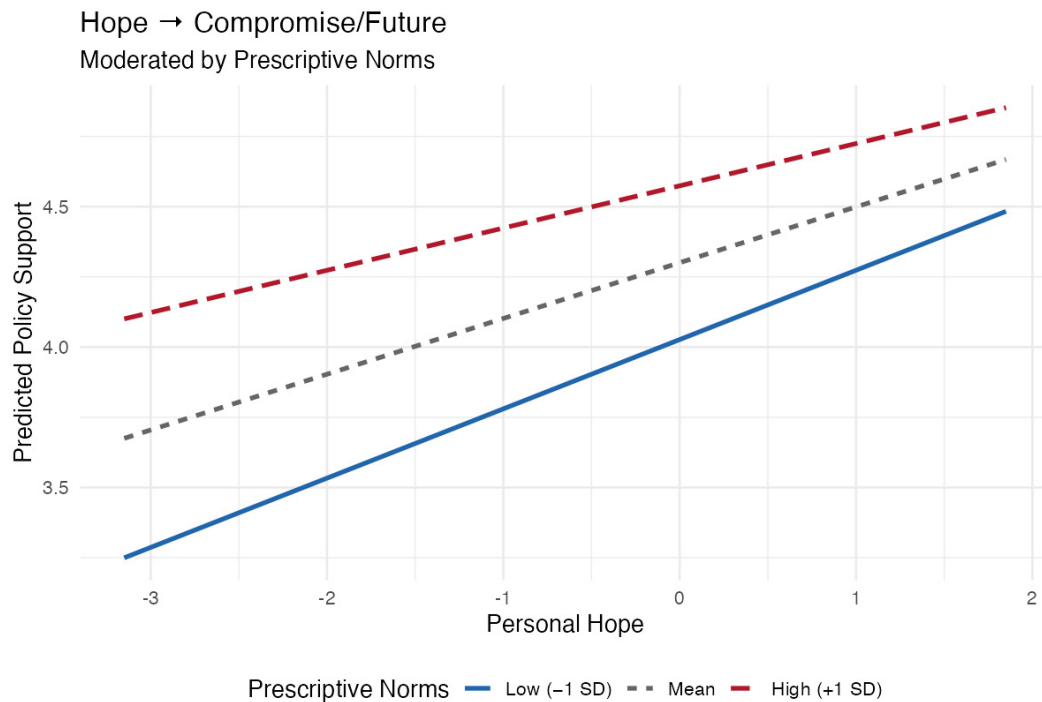


Figure 10.

RQ2b: Ingroup Emotional Norms

Descriptive norms.

Perceived descriptive norms (i.e., how many ingroup members feel the emotion) significantly moderated four of the seven emotion–policy links. The Hope × Descriptive Norm interaction on the compromise/future composite was significant ($b = -0.002$, $t = -10.66$, $p_{\text{holm}} < .001$). Simple slopes showed that hope's effect was strongest when perceived group hope was low ($b = 0.24$ at -1 SD) and weaker—though still significant—when perceived group hope was high ($b = 0.11$ at $+1$ SD). Similar attenuation patterns emerged for the fear–suppress criticism link ($b = -0.001$, $t = -2.82$, $p_{\text{holm}} = .020$), where fear predicted suppression of criticism only when few ingroup members were perceived to share that fear ($b = 0.04$ at -1 SD, $p = .003$) but not when descriptive norms were high ($b = -0.01$, $p = .56$). The anger–aggression ($p_{\text{holm}} = .007$) and guilt–reparation ($p_{\text{holm}} = .009$) interactions showed parallel attenuation patterns.

Prescriptive norms.

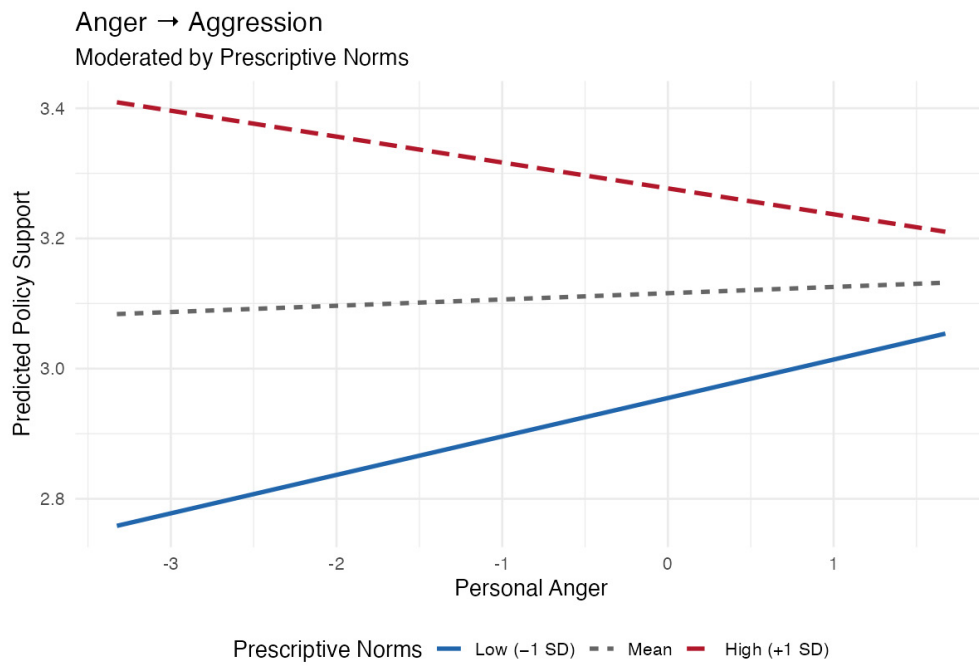


Figure 11.

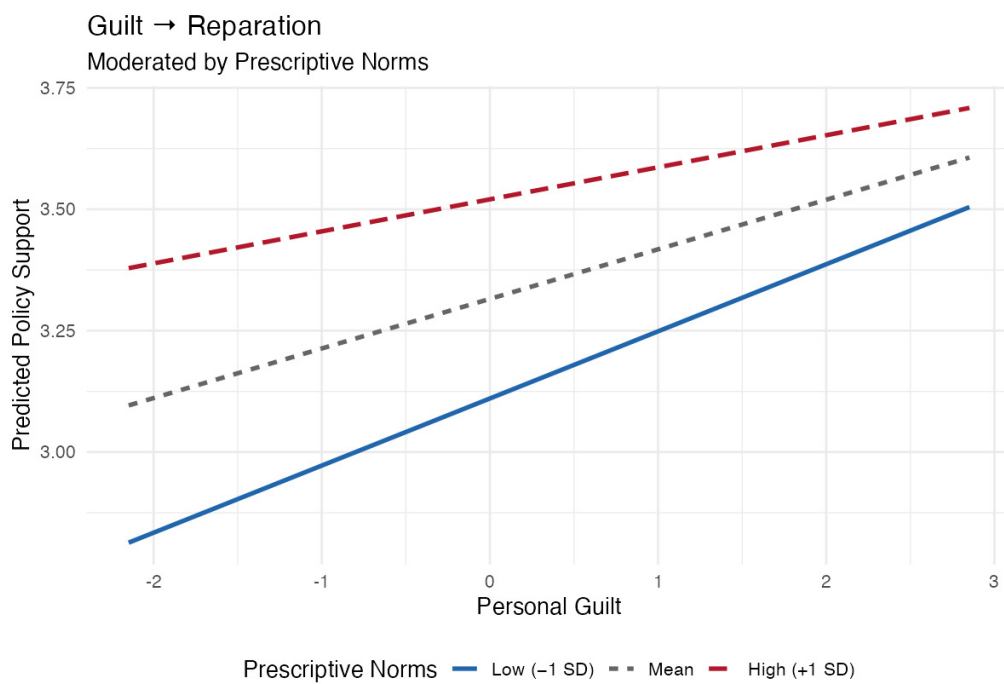


Figure 12.

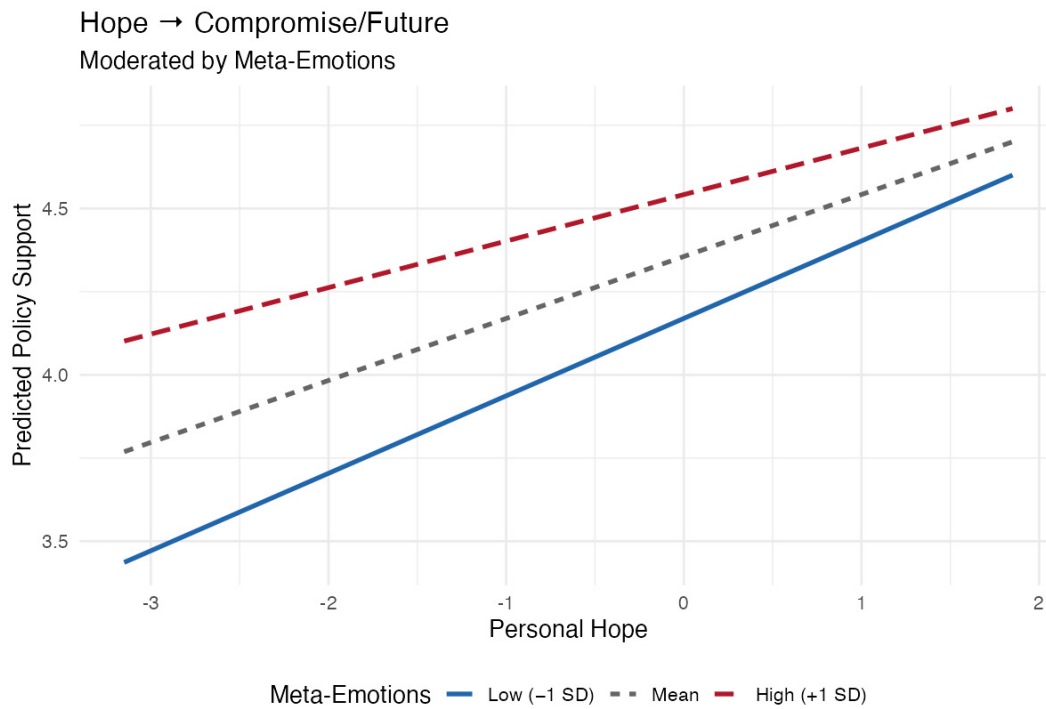


Figure 13.

Prescriptive norms (i.e., how many ingroup members think one should feel the emotion) moderated three emotion–policy links, again all in the negative direction. The Hope × Prescriptive Norm interaction on compromise/future was significant ($b = -0.002$, $t = -6.38$, $p_{\text{holm}} < .001$), with hope’s effect stronger at low prescriptive norms ($b = 0.25$) than high ($b = 0.15$).

The Anger × Prescriptive Norm interaction on aggression was notable ($b = -0.002$, $t = -4.66$, $p_{\text{holm}} < .001$): anger predicted aggression at low prescriptive norms ($b = 0.06$, $p = .001$) but was nonsignificant at the mean ($b = 0.01$, $p = .55$) and marginally reversed at high norms ($b = -0.04$, $p = .050$).

The guilt–reparation link was also moderated ($p_{\text{holm}} = .003$), with stronger effects at lower prescriptive norms.

RQ2c: Meta-Emotions (Perceived Outgroup Emotions)

Perceptions of how the outgroup feels significantly moderated two emotion–policy links. The Hope × Perceived Outgroup Hope interaction on com-

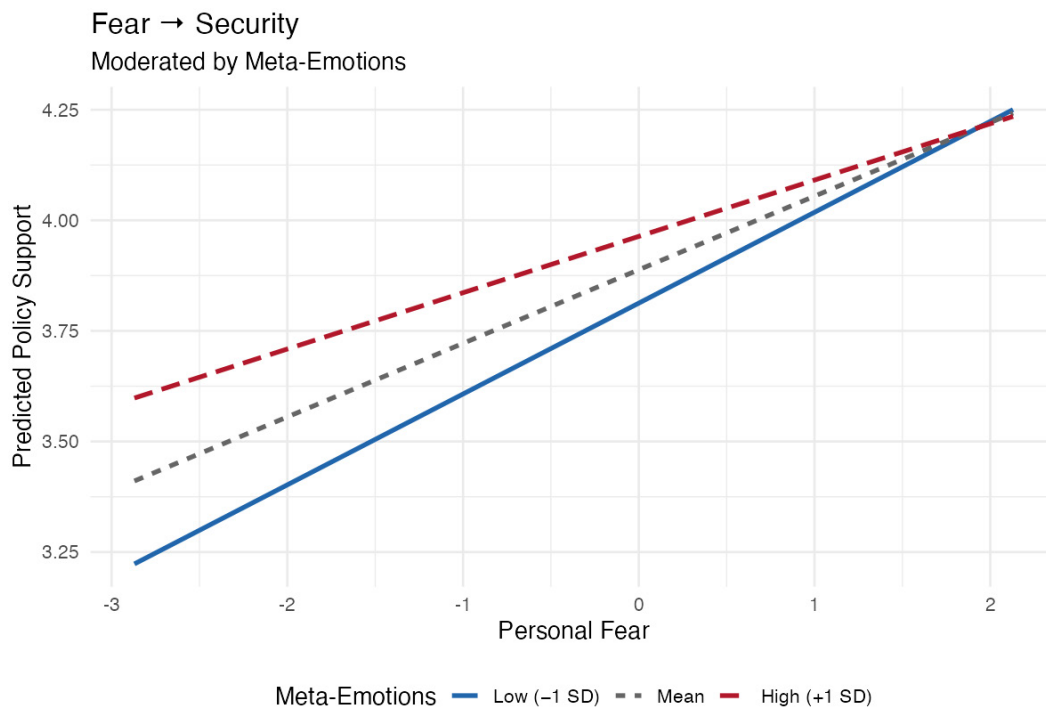


Figure 14.

promise/future was significant ($b = -0.002$, $t = -7.54$, $p_{\text{holm}} < .001$): personal hope predicted conciliatory policy support more strongly when perceived outgroup hope was low ($b = 0.23$ at -1 SD) than high ($b = 0.14$ at $+1\text{ SD}$).

The Fear $\times$ Perceived Outgroup Fear interaction on security was also significant ($b = -0.001$, $t = -4.64$, $p_{\text{holm}} < .001$), with fear predicting security more strongly when perceived outgroup fear was low ($b = 0.21$) than high ($b = 0.13$).

Notably, anger, guilt, hate, and empathy links were not moderated by corresponding outgroup emotion perceptions.

RQ2d: Conflict Stage

Conflict stage was the strongest moderator overall, with five of seven interactions reaching significance after Holm correction, four of which survived a nonlinearity check.

Hope $\rightarrow$ compromise/future. The Hope $\times$ Conflict Stage interaction was significant ($b = 0.039$, $t = 2.65$, $p_{\text{holm}} = .024$). Hope predicted conciliatory policy support in both settings, but the association was stronger in active conflicts ($b = 0.24$) than post-conflict settings ($b = 0.20$).

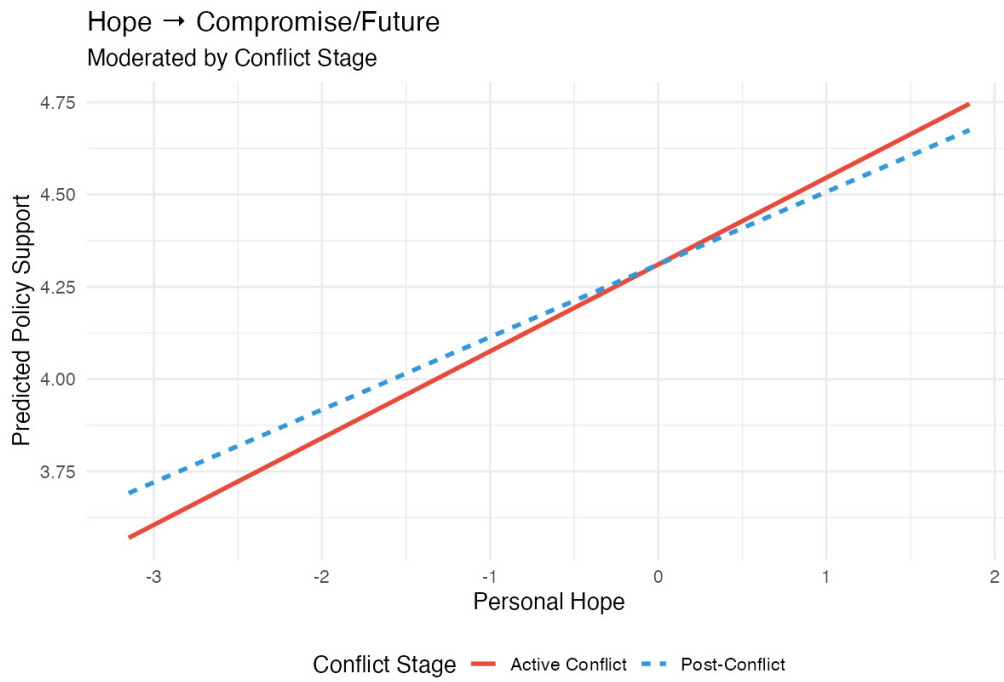


Figure 15.

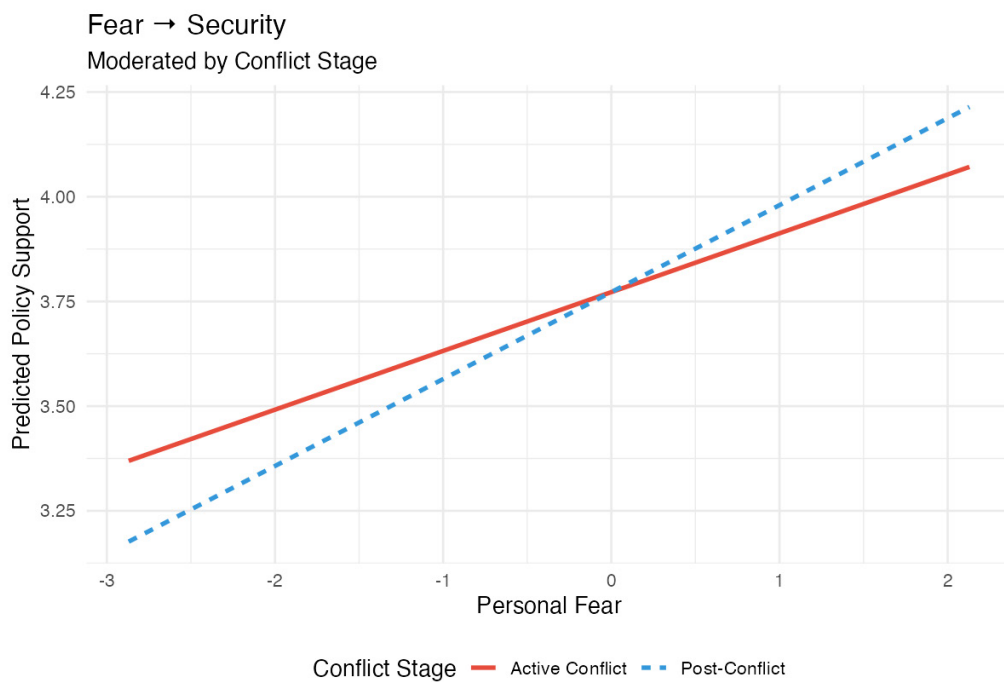


Figure 16.

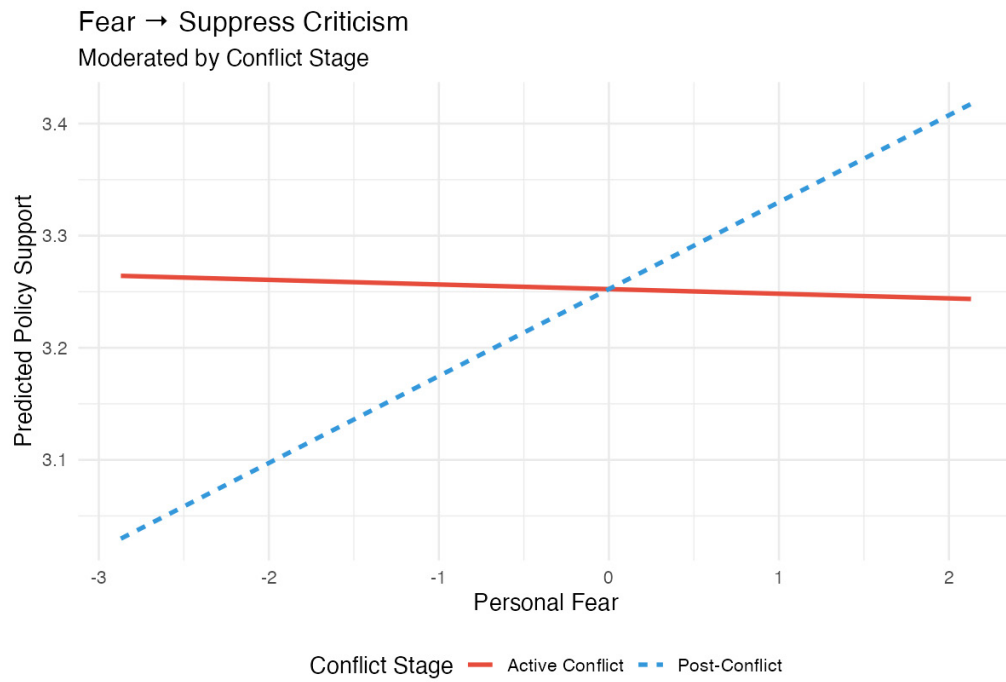


Figure 17.

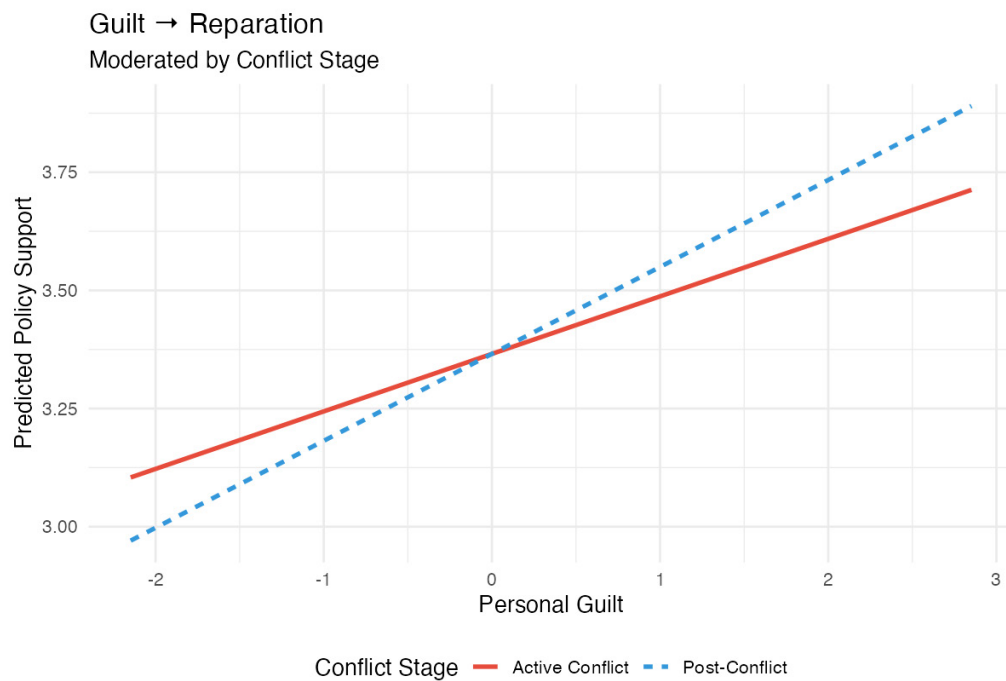


Figure 18.

Fear → security. The Fear × Conflict Stage interaction was significant ($b = -0.067$, $t = -3.70$, $p_{\text{Holm}} = .001$). Fear predicted security support in both settings, but more strongly in post-conflict contexts ($b = 0.21$) than in active conflicts ($b = 0.14$).

Fear → suppress criticism. This interaction was also significant ($b = -0.082$, $t = -4.20$, $p_{\text{Holm}} < .001$). Fear predicted suppression of criticism in post-conflict settings ($b = 0.08$, $p < .001$) but was nonsignificant in active conflicts ($b = -0.004$, $p = .78$).

Anger → aggression. The Anger × Conflict Stage interaction was significant in the linear model ($b = -0.089$, $t = -4.28$, $p_{\text{Holm}} < .001$), with anger predicting aggression in post-conflict contexts ($b = 0.12$, $p < .001$) but not in active conflicts ($b = 0.03$, $p = .069$). This interaction did not survive a nonlinearity check. Allowing a quadratic effect of anger reduced the interaction by 47% and rendered it nonsignificant ($b = -0.047$, $p = .092$), with a likelihood ratio test confirming curvature, $\chi^2(2) = 9.74$, $p = .008$. Curvature was also present for both fear interactions (suppress criticism: $\chi^2(2) = 11.08$, $p = .004$; security: $\chi^2(2) = 6.45$, $p = .040$); anger is distinguished not by being curved but by being the only one of the three that does not survive the quadratic. We therefore do not interpret this interaction.

Guilt → reparation. Conflict stage also moderated this link ($b = -0.062$, $t = -3.05$, $p_{\text{Holm}} = .009$). Guilt predicted reparation in both settings, but more strongly in post-conflict ($b = 0.18$) than active conflict contexts ($b = 0.12$).

Diagnostic checks ruled out range compression as an explanation: emotion and policy variables showed comparable variance across active and post-conflict samples (variance ratios = 0.91 to 1.31). A further check for nonlinearity in the focal emotion left the hope interaction essentially unchanged and slightly strengthened the guilt interaction, from $b = -0.062$ to $b = -0.073$, reduced the two fear interactions by roughly a third while both remained significant (security: $b = -0.045$, $p = .026$; suppress criticism: $b = -0.054$, $p = .014$), and eliminated the anger interaction. The attenuated slopes in active conflicts therefore reflect a substantive weakening of the emotion–policy link rather than restricted range.

The hate–exclusion ($p_{\text{Holm}} = .879$) and empathy–humanitarian/reconciliation ($p_{\text{Holm}} = .144$) associations were not significantly moderated by conflict stage, suggesting that hate and empathy operate with comparable strength regardless of whether the conflict is active or resolved.

Personal emotions may be most consequential for policy preferences precisely when they diverge from perceived group norms

Summary of Moderation Findings

Across 35 focused moderation tests, 16 reached significance after Holm correction. The five conflict-stage interactions were the only ones subjected to a nonlinearity check, and four of the five survived it. Several key patterns

emerged.

First, *conflict stage* was the most influential moderator. Emotion-policy links for fear and guilt were stronger in post-conflict settings than in active conflicts, while hope showed the opposite pattern, carrying greater motivational weight when the prospect of peace is uncertain.

Second, *ingroup emotional norms* consistently attenuated emotion-policy links, with all significant interactions negative. Both descriptive and prescriptive norms dampened the effect of personal emotions on their linked policies. This suggests a redundancy mechanism: when the ingroup widely shares or endorses an emotion, the incremental predictive value of personal emotion diminishes. Personal emotions may be most consequential for policy preferences precisely when they diverge from perceived group norms.

Third, *meta-emotions* moderated only hope and fear pathways, with perceived outgroup emotion attenuating the personal emotion-policy link. Perceiving that the outgroup shares one's hope or fear reduced the distinctiveness of these emotions in driving policy preferences.

Fourth, *political ideology* played a selective moderating role, amplifying the fear-security and hate-exclusion links among left-leaning participants. The remaining emotion-policy associations were robust across ideological positions.

Notably, the hate-exclusion link was remarkably robust to contextual moderation: of the five moderators tested, only political ideology significantly moderated this association. Similarly, the empathy-humanitarian/reconciliation link was not moderated by any of the five moderators tested, suggesting that empathy's prosocial policy effects are highly generalisable across ideological, normative, and conflict contexts.



***“ One result stood out:
hate, not anger, was
the strongest predictor
of both exclusion and
aggression. When you
account for hate, anger’s
role narrows ”***

Mabelle Kretchner

MORES Researcher,
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

5. Discussion

Two emotions barely move across 12 conflicts; the remainder are shaped by norms, ideology, and conflict stage

The present work examined whether discrete intergroup emotions predict their theoretically linked conflict policies more strongly than non-linked policies, and whether this specificity is moderated by political ideology, in-group emotional norms, meta-emotions, and conflict stage. Drawing on Intergroup Emotions Theory (Mackie et al., 2000; Smith, 1993) and leveraging the breadth of the Emotions and Norms in Conflicts Project across 12 active and post-conflict contexts, we offer the most comprehensive cross-national test of the IET specificity hypothesis to date.

Results provided partial support for emotion-policy specificity. Fear and guilt each showed their strongest association with a theoretically corresponding policy domain, and hate's two largest associations, exclusion and aggression, were effectively tied. The strict one-to-one mapping implied by a narrow reading of IET is better understood as a centre-of-gravity pattern, with several emotions extending meaningfully into neighbouring policy domains. Fear showed the cleanest specificity, being both the emotion most strongly tied to security policy and the strongest predictor of it. Guilt was most strongly associated with reparation, though empathy predicted reparation more strongly still. Hope predicted compromise and future-oriented policies strongly, but its largest single association was with reconciliation. Two findings deserve closer attention. First, hate dominated anger's hypothesised domain, emerging as the stronger predictor of both exclusion and aggression in the competitive multivariate test. When the variance hate shares with anger is partialled out, anger retains predictive power primarily for security rather than for outright aggression, extending cross-nationally a distinction long established in Israeli-Jewish samples (Halperin, 2008; Fischer et al., 2018).

Second, empathy operated as a robust predictor across the conciliatory policy domain rather than narrowly within humanitarian and reconciliation policies. Its largest single association was with reparation, and hope exceeded it on both policies to which it was linked *a priori*, suggesting that empa-

Emotional specificity is present but partial, with hate, hope, and empathy reaching beyond their hypothesised targets

thy's policy reach is broader but less distinctive than IET predicts.

The moderation analyses point to three substantive conclusions. Conflict stage was the most influential moderator, with emotion-policy links for fear and guilt stronger in post-conflict than active settings, and hope showing the opposite pattern. We read this as suggesting that in active conflicts, concrete threats and immediate political pressures crowd out individual emotional variation, while hope carries its greatest motivational weight precisely when peace is uncertain. Ingroup emotional norms consistently attenuated emotion-policy links, with every significant norm interaction in the negative direction. This points to a redundancy effect: when the ingroup is perceived to widely share an emotion, personal emotion loses incremental predictive value, nuancing the Penić et al. (2024) finding by showing that norms can simultaneously add direct predictive power and dampen the personal-emotion pathway. Ideology moderated only the fear-security and hate-exclusion links, and in both cases the effect was stronger among left-leaning participants. For exclusion this is consistent with compression at the scale ceiling among right-leaning respondents; for security the ceiling evidence is weaker, and elevated baseline fear on the right is the more likely account.

Two pathways stood out for their robustness across moderators: the hate-exclusion link, moderated only by ideology, and the empathy-conciliatory policy link, not moderated by any of the five factors tested. These represent the most generalisable emotion-policy pathways in our data and merit attention as candidates for intervention work.

Several limitations should be noted. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference, and the active-versus-post-conflict dichotomy simplifies what is in practice a continuum of conflict intensity. Self-report measures may be subject to culturally varying social-desirability concerns, particularly for hate and guilt. Longitudinal data from subsequent ENP waves will be essential for examining temporal dynamics. Finally, because differences between coefficients were not formally tested, closely spaced coefficients, such as hate's associations with exclusion and aggression, should not be read as ordered.

In conclusion, this work provides the broadest cross-national test to date of the IET specificity hypothesis. Emotional specificity is present but partial, with hate, hope, and empathy extending meaningfully beyond their hypothesised targets, and emotion-policy links shaped systematically by the normative landscape and the stage of conflict in which they unfold.



“The hate-exclusion and empathy-reconciliation links barely moved across contexts. That robustness is exactly what makes them the pathways worth targeting in policy interventions”

Eran Halperin

MORES co-investigator,
Hebrew University of Jerusalem,
Israel

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