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Alexander Thomas
thoma319@mail.chapman.edu

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Too Much Democracy? Trends in American Public Opinion of Israel

Alex Thomas

Department of Political Science, Chapman University; Orange, California

AMERICAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS

- The United States and Israel have enjoyed a "special relationship" since the moment it declared independence in 1948.
- Israel has received over \$230 billion in aid from the United States since 1948, equivalent to a per capita subsidy of \$500 from the US to every Israeli citizen each year.
- In 2016, the U.S. signed a Memorandum of Understanding entitling Israel to \$38 billion in aid over the next 10 years.
- In 2015, Israel voted with the U.S. in the United Nations 92.6% of the time, making it the single most reliable American ally in the U.N.
- Since 1972, the United States has vetoed 42 separate U.N. resolutions condemning Israel for its treatment of Palestinians.

EXPERT CONSENSUS ON NATIONAL INTEREST

- Scholars, foreign policy experts, and members of the international community generally agree that such staunch and one-sided support of Israel by the United States exacerbates the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and is detrimental to U.S. national interest.
- American support for Israel accompanied with its lack of support for Palestine has been consistently linked with the growth of anti-American sentiment and in the Middle East.
- Such support also undermines American moral authority, since Israel is not held accountable for its well-documented, discriminatory treatment of the Palestinians.

AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION

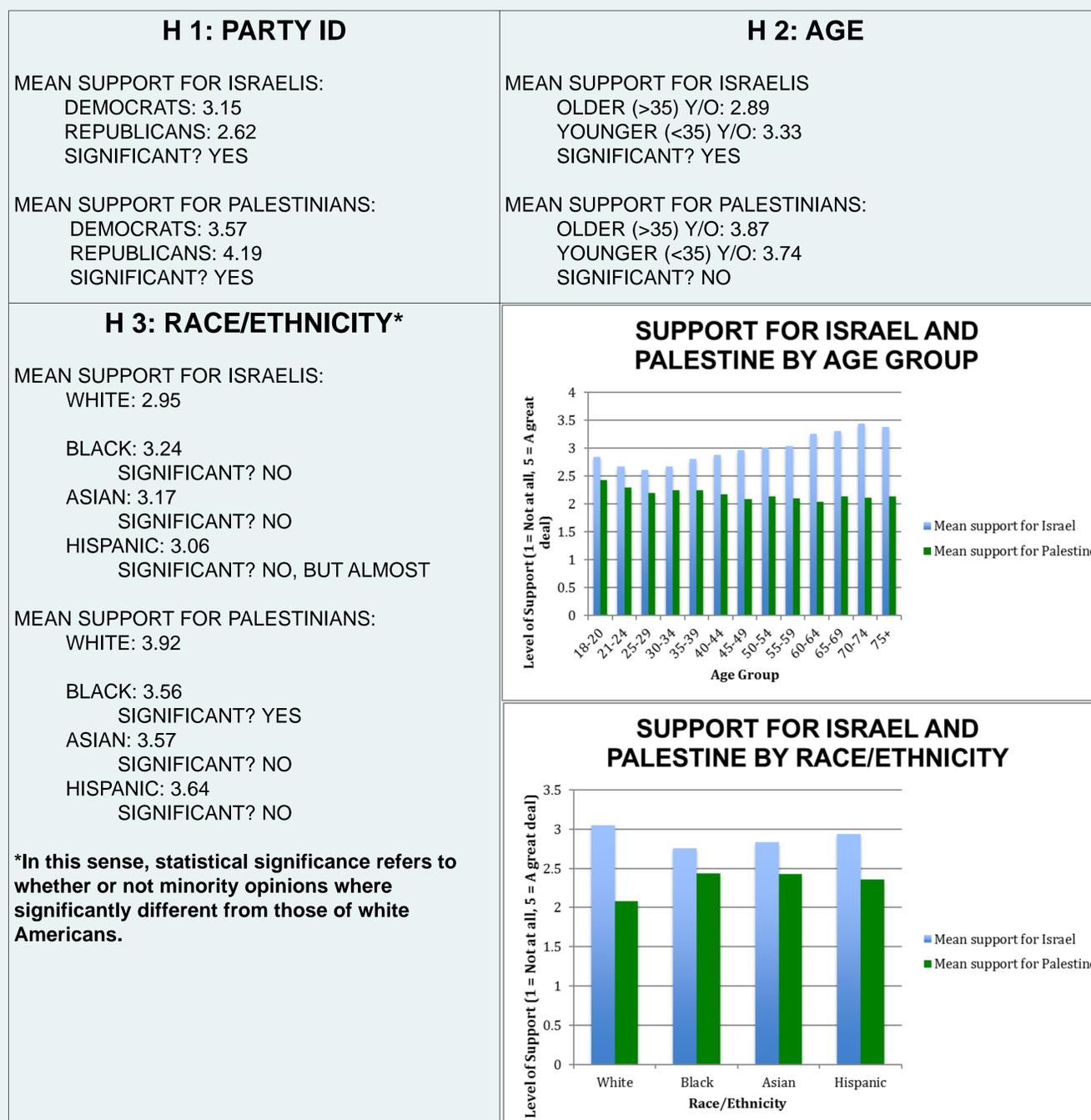
- Despite the counter-intuitiveness of current levels of support for Israel and the relatively small American Jewish population, empirical evidence shows that the American public overwhelmingly and bipartisanly favors a strong Israel.
- Americans sympathize with Israel over Arab nations by a ratio of 5:1. Nearly a third of Americans think the U.S. should take the side of Israel in the regional conflict, compared to 2% that think the U.S. should side with the Palestinians.
- However, public opinion trends suggest that support for Israel seems to be diminishing, particularly among Democrats, younger Americans, and minorities.

HYPOTHESES

- H 1: Republicans tend to support Israel more than Democrats; Democrats tend to support Palestine more than Republicans.
- H 2: Older Americans tend to support Israel more than younger; Younger Americans tend to support Palestine more than older.
- H 3: White Americans tend to support Israel more than minorities; Minorities tend to support Palestine more than white Americans.

RESULTS

All support results on a scale of 1-5, where 1= a great deal, 2= a lot, 3= a moderate amount, 4= a little, and 5= not at all.



FINDINGS

H 1: PARTY ID

In accordance with prior literature, Party Identification is indeed a reliable, statistically significant indicator of American support for both Israel and Palestine. Republicans tend to believe that the U.S. should support Israelis much more than Palestinians. On the other hand, Democrats tend to take a more balanced approach, believing that the U.S. should support both sides moderately. Democrats believe the U.S. should support Israel to a lesser extent than Republicans, and should support Palestine to a greater extent than Republicans.

H 2: AGE

Age is a reliable predictor of the degree to which Americans believe that the U.S. should support Israelis. Older Americans believe that the U.S. should support Israelis to a greater extent than younger Americans, and the table of means reveals that support for Israel increases fairly consistently with age.

On the other hand, support for Palestinians is not as readily predicted by age group. Although younger Americans support Palestinians more than older Americans, the difference is not statistically significant. However, the table of means reveals that support for Palestinians does follow a general trend of declining with age, suggesting that younger Americans are generally more supportive of Palestinians.

H 3: RACE/ETHNICITY

Race/ethnicity as an indicator of support for Israel and Palestine is more of a statistical mixed bag. The table of means indeed reveals that minorities universally possess lower levels of support for Israel and higher levels of support for Palestine than White Americans; however, the differences are not large enough to be deemed statistically significant. The exceptions are Black support of Palestine and very nearly Hispanic support of Israel, which both follow the aforementioned trends of minority support. This suggests that while race/ethnicity may account for some of the discrepancies in opinions, other socioeconomic or ideological factors must necessarily be considered.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of these findings suggest that what is currently a bipartisan, majority opinion is likely to become a fiercely debated issue in the arena of foreign policy. As party platforms realign after 2016 elections and American demographics shift over the coming years, politics thousands of miles away in the Middle East are likely to be drastically impacted.