

# A Persuasive Peace: Syrian Refugees' Attitudes towards Compromise and Civil War Termination

Kristin Fabbe  
Chad Hazlett  
Tolga Sinmazdemir

Working Paper 18-049



# A Persuasive Peace: Syrian Refugees' Attitudes towards Compromise and Civil War Termination

Kristin Fabbe  
Harvard Business School

Chad Hazlett  
UCLA

Tolga Sinmazdemir  
Bogazici University

**Working Paper 18-049**

Copyright © 2017, 2018 by Kristin Fabbe, Chad Hazlett, and Tolga Sinmazdemir

Working papers are in draft form. This working paper is distributed for purposes of comment and discussion only. It may not be reproduced without permission of the copyright holder. Copies of working papers are available from the author.

# A Persuasive Peace: Syrian Refugees' Attitudes towards Compromise and Civil War Termination

April 30, 2018

(Word Count: 10,025)

## **Abstract**

Civilians who have fled violent conflict and settled in neighboring countries are integral to processes of civil war termination. Contingent on their attitudes, they can either back peaceful settlements or support warring groups and continued fighting. Attitudes toward peaceful settlement are expected to be especially obdurate for civilians who have been exposed to violence. In a survey of 1,120 Syrian refugees in Turkey conducted in 2016, we use experiments to examine attitudes towards two critical phases of conflict termination – a ceasefire and a peace agreement. We test the malleability of refugees' attitudes to see if subtle changes in how these processes are framed or who endorses them can render a ceasefire proposal more or less favorable, or produce attitudes that are more or less open to compromise with the incumbent regime of Assad. Our results show, first, that refugees are far more likely to agree to a ceasefire proposed by a civilian as opposed to one proposed by armed actors from either the Syrian government or the opposition. Second, we find that merely describing the refugee community's wartime experience as *suffering* rather than *sacrifice* increases willingness to compromise with the Syrian government to bring about peace. This effect remains strong among those experiencing greater violence. Together, these results show that even among a highly pro-opposition population that has experienced severe violence, attitudes toward willingness to settle and make peace are remarkably malleable, depending on factors such as who proposes a deal and how wartime losses are characterized.

# 1 Introduction

Terminating civil wars, let alone proceeding to reconcile and reintegrate civilian communities to realize lasting peace and avoid future conflict, poses many seemingly insurmountable challenges. The Syrian conflict is a case in point. Ceasefires have been short-lived, millions have been displaced, and a durable peace settlement has proven elusive.

Do Syrian refugees – and especially those who have experienced violence firsthand – support a ceasefire with the incumbent regime? Under what conditions will refugees consider a peace agreement that keeps Assad in power? When will they shun these types of compromise and instead demand nothing short of fully removing the incumbent regime? These are critical questions, for civilians who have fled violence and settled in neighboring countries can be integral to ending or prolonging conflicts. Refugees can either back ceasefires and peaceful settlements or support warring groups and continued fighting (Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006; Salehyan, 2007, 2009). Furthermore, as surveys with Syrian refugees in Turkey show, the majority want to return home and continue their lives in post-civil war Syria, especially if a new political administration replaces the current regime (Erdogan, 2017). Therefore, refugees’ views are relevant for a durable settlement of the conflict in Syria. Moreover, a large segment of refugees in Turkey have family members still in Syria. Refugees’ views on the war therefore can influence the preferences of their family members currently in Syria and thereby shape war outcomes. Finally, Syrians in Turkey are sending remittances home, mostly to Aleppo and Damascus (Dean, 2015). Diaspora remittance flows are shown to affect civil war onset and recurrence, depending on whether remittances are sent for peaceful purposes (Regan and Frank, 2014) or to finance rebel groups and terrorism (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Elu and Price, 2012).

In this paper we examine Syrian refugees’ attitudes towards civil war termination. In contrast to prior work, we treat these attitudes as potentially malleable, rather than as already fixed outcomes of prior experiences. If refugees’ attitudes are in fact modifiable, despite being forged amid traumatic and encompassing experiences including displacement and exposure to violence, this has important intellectual implications for understanding how attitudes are shaped in conflict settings as well as practical implications for bringing about peace. Based on theory and contextual knowledge, we test two potentially powerful modifiers of attitudes towards willingness to stop fighting, compromise, and make peace: (a) who is responsible for proposing an agreement, particularly whether it is a civilian or armed actors; and (b) how wartime experiences with violence are characterized – as sacrifice or as suffering. We examine these two influences using a new survey of 1,120 Syrian refugees in Turkey conducted in the fall of 2016.

We argue that even among refugee communities in Turkey – groups that have fled extreme violence, overwhelmingly support Assad’s removal, and tend to identify with the opposition – attitudes about compromise and negotiated settlement are surprisingly malleable. Refugees’ willingness to accept ceasefires, peaceful negotiations, and settlements that leave Assad in power are contingent upon who advocates them and how past experiences of violence are framed. Specifically refugees in our sample are 11 to 14 percentage points more likely to agree with a ceasefire and peace process arrangement when proposed by civilians as opposed to military commanders from either the regime or the opposition, suggesting a special signaling value of civilian proposers of peace. In practice, it also suggests that armed actors – from either side – may not be the most persuasive actors to convince civilian communities to compromise rather than become or support spoilers. Second, we find that framing refugees’ collective experiences with violence as *suffering* rather than *sacrifice* increases support for a peace agreement that involves compromising with the regime by 14 to 18 percentage points. This holds whether the suffering is described within the family or the community, and it holds or is magnified among those who come from neighborhoods that have experienced direct violence. Together, these findings provide two initial but powerful examples of how small changes in (1) how peace processes are proposed or (2) how conflict narratives are constructed, can widely shift individual attitudes in ways

that either help or hinder compromise, and thus war termination via negotiated settlement.

These findings are all the more remarkable given that a substantial portion of our respondents showed an unwillingness to compromise with the regime prior to the survey experiments, with 80 percent seeing Assad’s removal as an ideal resolution of the conflict, and 20 percent considering execution of the fighters affiliated with his regime as the appropriate punishment. Against this backdrop, finding that respondents’ attitudes can be shifted (at least in the short term) by simply altering *who* proposes a ceasefire and/or by describing wartime experiences differently, suggests not only the theoretical importance of these influences over attitudes, but also new ways forward for constructing viable peace processes and negotiated settlements that result in stable conflict termination.

## 2 Violence and the Role of Refugees in Civil War Termination

Ceasefires and negotiated peace settlements have become increasingly important to conflict termination in recent decades. Whereas during the cold war the vast majority of civil wars ended in military victory (72 percent), in the 1990s only 31 percent of wars ended in a military victory with the number decreasing to 11 percent between 2000-2007 (Hartzell, 2018).<sup>1</sup> Although negotiated settlements became the norm, their flaws and weaknesses also became increasingly apparent. For example, Toft (2009) argues that the focus on negotiated settlements is “a problem”, in part because such settlements tend to be precarious and are more likely to result in repeated outbreaks of violence than outright victories. Such settlements often break down because of disagreements over mutual disarmament and political power sharing (Fearon and Latin, 2008) and/or because spoilers and veto players can spark a return to conflict (for example see Kydd and Walter (2002); Stedman (1997); Newman and Richmond (2006)).

To better understand the mechanisms behind these failures, the study of conflict termination has matured to incorporate the subcomponents of negotiated settlements—including the nuances of ceasefires and peace agreements—into the broader scholarly agenda (Åkebo, 2016; Karakus and Svensson, 2017). Nonetheless, we still lack micro-level studies of civilians’ attitudes towards conflict termination arrangements—and especially the attitudes of civilians who have been displaced from the war theater but wish to return. This is problematic, for research has shown that refugee populations can be an important source of conflict diffusion and prolongation (Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006; Salehyan, 2007, 2009). If we wish to understand the feasibility of compromise with the incumbent regime as well as the long-term viability of ceasefires and peace settlements in a given conflict, the views of those who have fled across the border but remain deeply connected to war outcomes cannot be ignored.

### 2.1 Attitudinal Responses to Violence

One would expect that refugees’ attitudes towards war termination will be shaped, at least in part, by the violence they experienced during the war. A burgeoning scholarship on civilian responses to violence acknowledges that attitudes are shaped by traumatic experiences. This body of research, however, remains divided on whether such experiences result in more hostile and war-prone vs. more pro-social, conciliatory and peaceful attitudinal dispositions. For example, Hirsch-Hoefler et al. (2016) find that exposure to terrorism and political violence in Israel “hardens hearts” against peace efforts. Focusing on the same conflict, Grossman and Miodownik (2015) show that exposure to high-intensity combat hardens attitudes towards the rival and reduces support for negotiation and compromise among

---

<sup>1</sup>There is some evidence to suggest that, as old cold-war rivalries resurface and international norms change, military victories may be making a resurgence (Morjé Howard and Stark, 2017)

Israeli ex-combatants.<sup>2</sup> On the other side of the ledger, Krause (2017) employs an observational study in Colombia, finding that areas more exposed to FARC-related violence were more supportive of the referendum on a peace accord with FARC. A quasi-experimental study of violence faced by Darfurian refugees similarly finds that those exposed to greater violence within individual villages hold more pro-peace attitudes (Hazlett, 2016).<sup>3</sup>

Setting aside the directional effects (pro-peace vs. anti-peace) of exposure to violence, one might also expect refugees' attitudes –and especially attitudes about war termination– to be obdurate since they were forged in a context characterized by traumatic experiences, including displacement, upheaval and worse. Still, conflicts are partly battles over how people should think about the experience of war – particularly gains and losses, both in the past and the future (Kalyvas, 2006; Christia, 2012). As with other processes of attitude-formation, how individuals understand the wages of war (Scheufele and Iyengar, 2012) and the advantages of conflict termination may depend on how they are contextualized or framed. The ability to manipulate attitudes by varying how a piece of information is presented is well known to scholars of public opinion (see e.g. Hurwitz, 1989; Maoz, 1990; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; Zaller, 1992). To this end, much work also has been done to demonstrate how framing can shift the attitudes of Americans or other publics on the home-front. For example, Boettcher III and Cobb (2009) examine whether framing US war casualties in Iraq to American subjects as a “sacrifice” influenced individuals' commitment to continuing the conflict. They find that the sacrifice frame strengthens hawks' commitment, but weakens that of doves. In a similar study, Schott et al. (2011) find that the framing effect of stating war casualties is moderated by the attainability of the military goal.

Can similar framing effects be found among civilian refugees who have recently fled an active theater of war? Or are refugees' attitudes firmly fixed by their experiences? Given the logistical and security challenges associated with such research, there are few empirical studies of civilian attitudes toward combatants and/or peace settlements during wartime, and even fewer examining the strength of various framing effects that might influence these attitudes. This is problematic because framing effects are expected to be weaker in issue domains with high salience, as we would expect to be the case with attitudes about war termination among refugees. In one notable exception, Corstange and York (2017) recently conducted a survey experiment with Syrian refugees in Lebanon to investigate “how the different war narratives spun by the government and the opposition affect how people view the causes of war”. They find a sectarian framing effect “but only for some people, and only when sheltered from discursive competitors,” and concludes that “elites are more constrained in their ability to frame than we commonly suppose”. Conversely, in prior work on “intractable conflicts” where opinions are also assumed to be strong and fixed, Gayer et al. (2009) find that emphasizing possible future losses increases the chances that Israeli subjects will consider new peace options. We seek to build on this nascent literature by studying how subtle shifts in the framing of proposed agreements (by varying the proposer) or in the community's experiences with violence (as sacrifice or suffering), can alter attitudes regarding war termination.

---

<sup>2</sup>Examining possible mechanisms for this type of finding, Canetti et al. (2017) find that exposure to political violence increases threat perception, psychological distress, and decreases support for political compromise. Petersen (2002), who also homes in on mechanisms, uses emotional motivations to explain the attitudes and behaviors of victimized communities that are driven to take up arms or otherwise support violence against their perpetrators

<sup>3</sup>A rich emerging literature also focuses on the effects of violence on a variety of outcomes including community engagement, trust, and/or cooperation with many studies finding that violence produces “pro-social” behavior (see Bauer et al., 2016 for a recent review). However, as noted in Bauer et al. (2016), these apparently pro-social behaviors are often parochial, directed towards the in-group members. The consequences of such effects on a broader desire for peace with other groups remains unclear.

## 2.2 Who Proposes Peace?

One potentially powerful source for modifying attitudes about conflict termination lies in cues about the identity of *who* exactly is speaking out in favor of compromise and negotiation. Specifically we examine whether it matters if it is armed actors (either from the regime or opposition) or civilians who proposes a ceasefire. On one hand, armed actors may be more persuasive as spokespeople for peace, because they have more immediate control over the use of violence, and so their advocacy of a ceasefire might be seen as more valuable. Indeed, much of the political science research on civil conflict assumes that elites are the key actors who ultimately determine civilians' positions on who to ally with, who to fight, and who to make peace with (see e.g. Christia, 2012; Varshney, 2003).

On the other hand, there are several theoretical reasons to expect that civilians would be more persuasive as spokespeople for compromise, negotiation and peace. First, "informational social influence" can be one powerful source of persuasion (Cialdini, 2001), in which a person who is otherwise unsure of the correct behavior looks to others for information. Among factors that may influence this process, the similarity of the messenger to the person receiving the message can increase persuasive impact (see e.g. Platow et al, 2005). Similarly, "self-categorization" theory emphasizes that when individuals identify with a particular group (here, as members of a civilian community apart from military elites), "sources" in that group (here other civilians) can obtain social influence on the "target" (here, our respondent)(e.g. see Turner and Oakes, 1998; Turner, 1991). Such theories would predict that a ceasefire proposal made by other civilians would be more persuasive simply because civilians are considered to be individuals in the same group as the respondent, with a similar plight. Knowing that a person "like you", who has probably faced extreme hardship as a result of the war, is willing advocate a compromise via a ceasefire may persuade the respondent that they should do the same.

Furthermore, cues showing that other civilians support a ceasefire could make respondents feel that it is socially *permissible* and safe to speak out in favor of conflict termination. Such cues might be particularly salient in communities that would otherwise impose an expectation to seek revenge in response to past violence.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, immediate security concerns alone may force respondents to care about what other civilians think. Community members may worry about informants, and in our case, especially informants working for the opposition. These informants can provide important information to their patrons (opposition leaders and fighters), including the identity of regime sympathizers (see e.g. Kalyvas, 2006). Syrian refugees in Turkey, many of whom fled from opposition held territory, may feel obligated to show full-throated support for their larger communities' putative, pro-opposition objectives, and thus express a refusal to compromise with the Syrian government for fear of raising suspicion that they are regime sympathizers. Only if they believe that compromising with the regime would be seen as acceptable in the community – such as when another civilian proposes it – could they show support.

This is not only of theoretical interest; the question of the identity of the spokesperson for a ceasefire and eventual war termination is also directly relevant in the ongoing efforts to end the civil war in Syria. First, since the third round of the Geneva peace talks between the Syrian government and the opposition, UN Special Envoy Steffan de Mistura has consulted civil society organizations such as the Women's Advisory Board, the Civil Society Support Room, and the Experts Room (Alzoubi, 2017). However, these civil society organizations have been asking for a more extensive role in peace talks (Zena, 2017). Second, civilians have been actively involved in the negotiation of local ceasefires in various areas of conflict in Syria as well (Araabi and Hilal, 2016). These civilian actors include local notables, activists as well as Syrians with different occupations, such as doctors, and teachers. The impact of civilians, and especially of local notables in these negotiations have been arguably both positive and negative (see e.g. Karakus and Svensson, 2017; Araabi and Hilal, 2016).

---

<sup>4</sup>More broadly, this has been theorized in the form of the "culture of honor" (Nisbett and Cohen, 1996), which proposes that in some cultures, members are socially obligated to show a desire for vengeance.

Our experiments shed light on these critical issues by studying whether the inclusion of civilian actors in ceasefire processes makes these agreements more acceptable to Syrian refugees, many of whom hope to return home, relative to a ceasefire that results from negotiations dominated only by the warring parties.

## 2.3 Framing losses: sacrifice vs. suffering

In an interview with the Guardian, Free Syrian Army commander, Abu al-Farouq, said: “Any truce with the regime is unacceptable after all the *sacrifices* we made.”<sup>5</sup> By contrast, in the fourth round of Geneva peace talks, while addressing representatives of Assad’s government and the opposition, UN Special Envoy de Mistura used a different framing, “The Syrian people desperately all want an end to this conflict and you all know it...They are waiting for a relief from their own *suffering* and dream of a new road out of this nightmare to a new and normal future in dignity.”<sup>6</sup> These two examples illustrate use of the terms “sacrifice” and “suffering” by actors in the Syrian conflict to argue for or against war termination. Are they in fact persuasive? In this section we turn to theoretical motivations for our second experiment, which examines how the framing of wartime experiences as sacrifice or as suffering influences willingness to settle in order to achieve peace.

Beginning with the term “sacrifice”, we consider first “escalation of commitment” (or the sunk cost fallacy), a concept that has been widely invoked in numerous disciplines with roots in prospect theory,<sup>7</sup> and in the context of social groupings, in social identification theory (see e.g. Dietz-Uhler, 1996). Individuals do not wish to seek their past behaviors “wasted” by giving up on the purpose for which they originally acted, even when continuing the same behavior is irrational (Staw, 1976). Rather, when faced with losses, they may double down on their original commitment rather than abandon it (Arkes and Blumer, 1985; Thaler and Johnson, 1990; Weber and Zuchel, 2005). These concepts are particularly relevant in a conflict setting like the Syrian Civil War, where the losses incurred after an uprising may be well beyond the scale that any of the original participants imagined. Accordingly, we expect that the word “sacrifice” will have the effect of engaging a sunk-cost type of thinking: e.g. *so much has been invested in this conflict, how could one give up and settle with Assad now?*

By comparison, the term “suffering” also implies a loss, but emphasizes the pain or cost of that loss. As argued in earlier work on “war-weariness”, those who feel the cost of violence most strongly may also be inclined to avoid future violence, compromise and bring about peace.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, by priming loss without referencing the goals for which that loss was made, the word “suffering” is less likely to engage sunk-cost reasoning compared to “sacrifice”. Thus, we expect the “suffering” prime to trigger thinking along the following lines: *we have faced so much hardship already, perhaps ending this conflict is the best thing for the community.*

---

<sup>5</sup>Emphasis added. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/11/war-in-syria-how-my-life-has-changed>

<sup>6</sup>Emphasis added. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-un/syrias-warring-sides-face-off-as-u-n-tells-them-end-the-nightmare-idUSKBN16217C>

<sup>7</sup>For a general overview of prospect theory see: Kahneman and Tversky (1984). For a review of prospect theory in political science see: McDermott (2004); Levy (1992).

<sup>8</sup>For a review of the war weariness literature, see Levy and Morgan (1986), though it has been generally applied to international conflicts and study of war recurrence or initiation. More recent empirical findings supportive of a “weary” effect of violence on attitudes toward peace in the context of civil conflict can be found in Krause (2017) and Hazlett (2016).



# 3 The Syrian Civil War and Syrian Refugees in Turkey

The Syrian civil war was sparked by protests that began in March 2011, when children aged between 9 and 15 were detained and reportedly tortured for writing graffiti denouncing the Assad regime on the walls of their school in Der'a (McHugo, 2014). Soon the protests started to spread to other cities and were met with a harsh response from the regime (Hokayem, 2013). By July 2012, the initial protests that were largely semi-urban and peaceful, had turned into a brutal civil war, fought between the Syrian government forces and multiple rebel factions, including both secular and Islamist groups (McHugo, 2014; De Juan and Bank, 2015). There were attempts to bring the warring parties to comprise via a negotiated solution around that time. The most significant of these attempts was the Annan plan. The plan failed, in part because of the already enormous scale of death and destruction, which made opposition groups unwilling to compromise with the Assad regime (Lynch, 2016). With the Russian air strikes in Fall 2015, the war also became a proxy conflict between actors supporting the regime (Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah) and those who support the opposition (US, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar) (Phillips, 2016).

The human costs of the war have been devastating: an estimated 475,000 people have died, and close to 14 million Syrians have been wounded or displaced (SOHR, 2017). Among those displaced, more than 5 million had to leave Syria and have become refugees (UNHCR, 2017). The overwhelming majority of the refugees in Turkey have fled Syria as a result of the attacks by Assad's forces (Kirisici, 2014), and therefore are believed to be pro-opposition. In fact, about 70 percent of the respondents in our sample see the opposition groups in Syria as their closest representative (with the remainder saying that no one represents them).

According to the statistics provided by Turkey's Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), as of April 5, 2018, there are 3,572,565 registered Syrian refugees in Turkey. About 6% of them are settled in the 21 camps run by the Turkish government, while the vast majority reside among the Turkish population in urban areas. About 60 % of non-camp refugees are living in 4 provinces of Turkey: İstanbul, Gaziantep, Hatay, and Şanlıurfa.<sup>9</sup>

## 4 Methods

### 4.1 Survey Sampling

Conducting research with highly mobile and vulnerable populations is challenging, and studying Syrian refugees in Turkey is made more difficult for several reasons. Unlike most refugee crises, where the response is coordinated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Turkish government has insisted on directly controlling the Syrian refugee registration and management process within its own borders through two state-controlled bodies, the Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) and the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM). AFAD tightly controls access to the refugee camps and completely prohibits researchers from entering. Furthermore, AFAD and DGMM also refuse to release any detailed data on the origin areas or settlement patterns of refugees entering Turkey.<sup>10</sup> Finally, in the spring of 2015, the Interior Ministry announced that academic research with Syrian refugee populations in Turkey was subject to the approval of the ministry. This approval requirement was lifted by the end of 2015. Taken together, these regulations and prohibitions have limited researchers' access to refugee populations.

---

<sup>9</sup>The province-level numbers of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey are available at [http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma\\_363\\_378\\_4713\\_icerik](http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik).

<sup>10</sup>The one exception is the report published by AFAD (2013) based on a survey conducted in 2013.

Given the limitations cited above, our sampling strategy involved three stages, which we describe in the Appendix. We sampled Turkish provinces with the highest number of Syrians present: Istanbul, Hatay, Sanliurfa and Gaziantep. The absence of official, detailed data on refugee movements in Turkey required us to obtain much of our preliminary information on refugee neighborhoods in these provinces through key informant interviews at organizations serving Syrian refugee communities in Turkey. These organizations included legal and psycho-social support centers, schools and medical facilities.

The resulting sample includes 1,120 Syrian making this survey, to our knowledge, the largest and most comprehensive survey of political attitudes of Syrian refugees in Turkey. While showing some variation across provinces, our response rate was 34 percent<sup>11</sup>. The geographic distribution of the sample by Syrian governorate is in Figure 1.

Figure 1

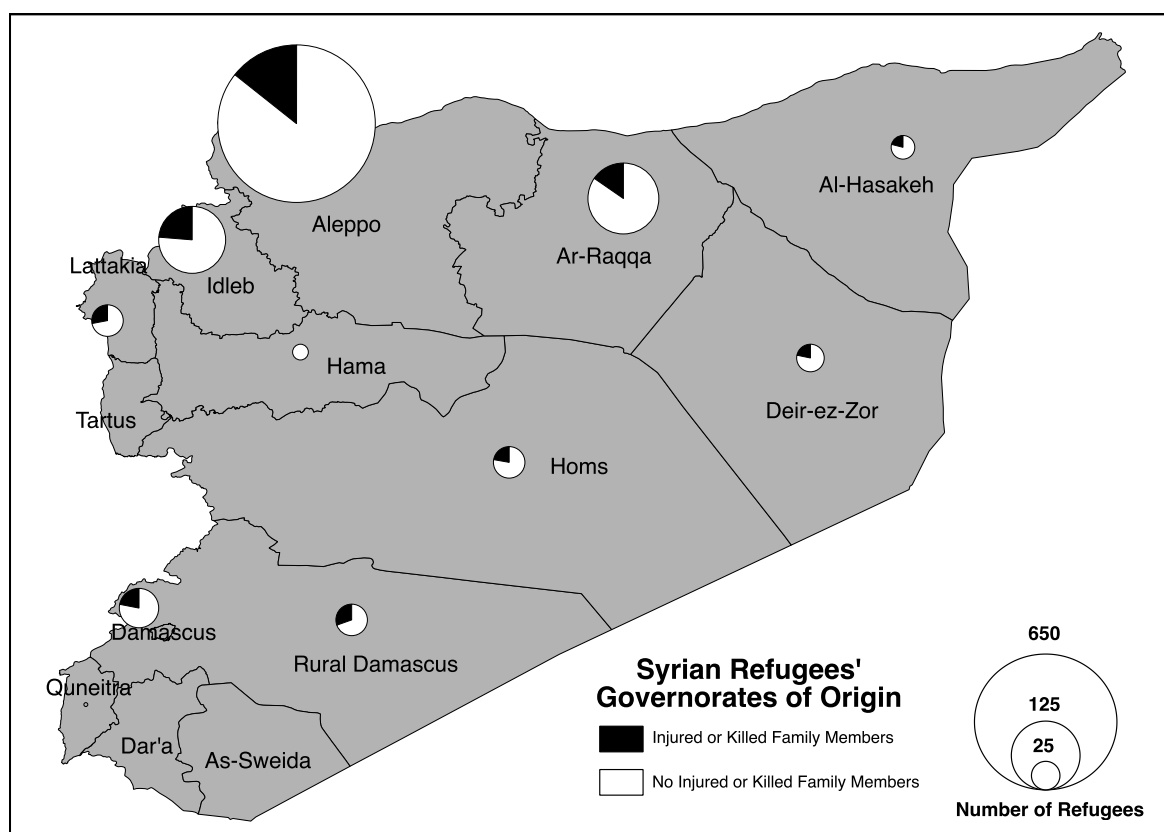


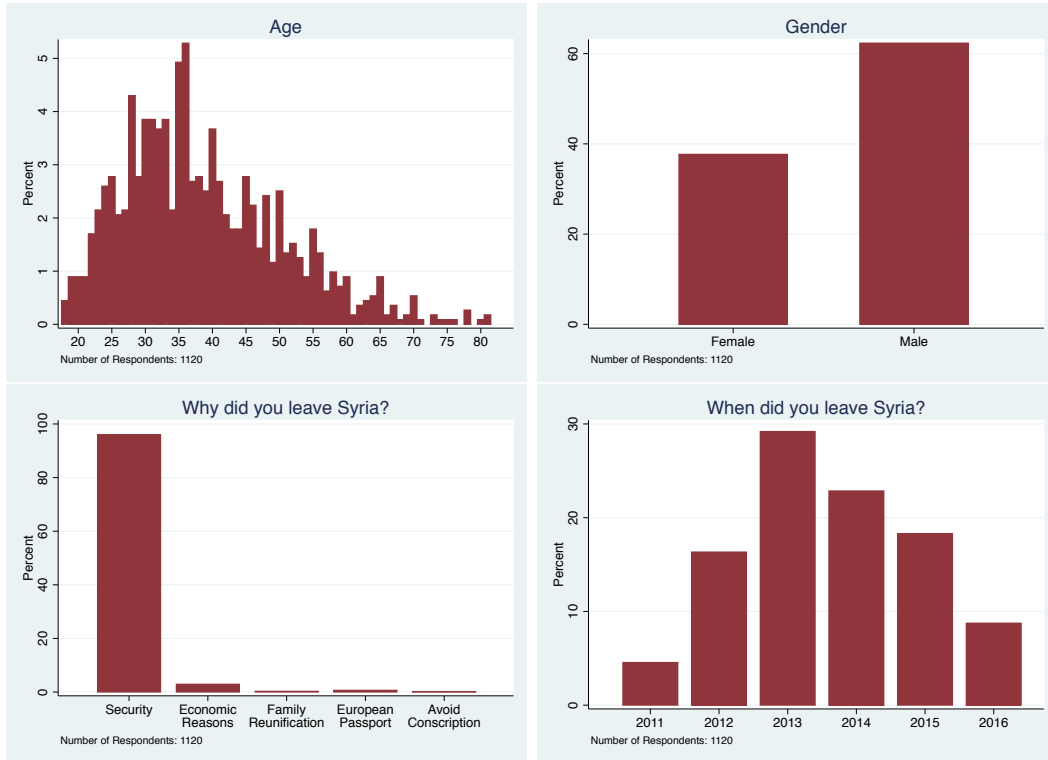
Figure 2 shows the distribution of age in our sample together with other demographics. It is also important to note that when asked for the main reason why they left Syria, an overwhelming majority of our respondents specified security concerns, as opposed to other reasons, such as economic considerations, family reunification, escaping to Europe or avoiding conscription. Our sample also shows significant variation on the time of leaving Syria. While essentially all of our respondents left Syria after the start of the civil war, 80% of them left Syria in 2013 or later, when the fighting became more severe, especially in and around Aleppo (Amnesty International, 2015).

## 4.2 Experiment 1: Identity of a Ceasefire Proposer

Experiment one tests how the identity of who is proposing an arrangement (here, a ceasefire and return to peaceful negotiation) effects respondents' willingness to accept it, and particularly whether a civilian proposer engenders higher agreement than those of armed

<sup>11</sup>American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Response Rate 1 formula. The Turkish households randomly selected during sampling are not counted in this response rate.

Figure 2: Key Demographic Descriptives



(a) Key demographic statistics: Age distribution (*top left*), gender distribution (*top right*), stated reason for leaving Syria (*bottom left*), and year departing Syria (*bottom right*).

actors on either side. To test this, we randomly assigned each respondent to a condition in which the person proposing a ceasefire could be:

1. A commander of the Syrian Army
2. A commander from the opposition
3. A civilian non-combatant who has lost a limb during the war
4. A civilian non-combatant

Participants are then prompted with a statement about a hypothetical ceasefire, saying that the assigned actor “spoke out in favor of laying down arms and returning to a non-violent political process.” We then ask respondents about their level of agreement with the statement (Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neutral, Somewhat agree, Strongly agree).

### 4.3 Experiment 2: Framing of Wartime Experiences

Experiment two is designed to determine whether the willingness to compromise for peace (here, accept a peace agreement that includes a role for the Assad regime in governance, versus demanding the regime’s full removal) depends upon how wartime experiences of violence are frame. Specifically, participants were randomly assigned to one of four prime conditions:

- A. *family suffering*: “As we’ve discussed, you and your family have lost and suffered through a lot during this conflict.”
- B. *community suffering*: “I don’t need to tell you, your community has lost an enormous amount and suffered considerably since the war began.”
- C. *community sacrifice*: “I don’t need to tell you, a lot of people, possibly some from your own community, have fought hard and sacrificed a lot to get to this point.”

- D. *original motives*: “Recalling for a moment what motivations led people such as you or members of your community to initially want a change and try to make a better Syria, what would you say the main reason was?”

After the prime, participants were then asked “Given this, what kind of political settlement do you think the leadership that most closely represents you should accept in order to put an end to the violence?”, with four answer options:

1. Accept a peace settlement that ends the fighting, regardless of who maintains control.
2. Accept a peace settlement that ends the fighting, but only if Syria becomes a federal country with some areas outside of the Assad regime’s control.
3. Accept a peace settlement that ends the fighting, but only if the regime is removed entirely from Syria.
4. No political settlement is acceptable, fighting should continue until a outright military victory.

We note that one challenge with this question is that there is no natural “control condition”. Respondents have some mental state and information in mind at the time of questioning. We thus must rely on comparisons between conditions – for example, comparing attitudes under the “community suffering” prime to outcomes under the “community sacrifice” prime – to ascertain whether attitudes depend on the prime, and the relative differences between any two primes.

### 4.3.1 Perceived chances of opposition victory

Finally, to study whether these primes also influence reported beliefs about the potential for (opposition) victory in the conflict, we also ask our respondents to assess the likelihood of opposition victory (very likely, somewhat likely, chances are even, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely). We map these to probabilities 0, .25, .5, .75, and 1 for purposes of simple and interpretable analysis below.

## 4.4 Hypotheses

In Experiment 1, we are first interested in whether support for a ceasefire is higher when a civilian proposes it, than when either opposition or regime commanders propose it. Second, to test whether high agreement with a civilian proposal is really just high agreement with somebody presumed to take an opposition proposition, we look to the sub-sample of respondents who explicitly reported that they identify with the opposition, thereby allowing us to determine if support for a civilian-proposed ceasefire remains higher than an opposition commander-proposed ceasefire even within this group. We thus test:

H1: Respondents are more likely to favor a ceasefire when a civilian proposes it than when armed leaders from either side propose it.

H1b: Even among respondents who report that the opposition most closely represents them, a ceasefire proposed by a civilian generates higher approval than one proposed by opposition commanders.

For Experiment 2, our key comparisons aim first to determine if willingness to settle with the regime varies depending on whether violence is framed as community sacrifice, community suffering, family suffering, or a prime to recall the original motives for the uprising. We are further interested in whether the effect of sacrifice versus suffering is sustained in communities that experiences the most violence and thus may have the most hardened attitudes. Finally, we examine whether these primes also influence reported optimism about the prospects for opposition victory. We thus test:

H2: Relative to violence framed as *sacrifice*, violence framed as *community suffering* (H2a) and as *family suffering* (H2b) will generate higher willingness to settle with the regime. A prime to recall the original motives will not produce a detectable increase in willingness compared to *sacrifice* (H2c).

H3: Relative to violence framed as *sacrifice*, violence framed as *community suffering* (H2a) and as *family suffering* (H2b) also will generate higher willingness to settle with the regime in a sub-sample of respondents from neighborhoods that have suffered deaths and injuries.

H4: Violence framed as community *sacrifice* will make respondents more optimistic about the likelihood of an opposition victory against the incumbent regime.

## 4.5 Estimation Procedures

For both experiments, because the primes are randomized, no adjustment or conditioning is required, and we simply conduct difference-in-means tests allowing unequal variance. We present randomization checks in the Appendix.

# 5 Results

## 5.1 Descriptive statistics

We begin by briefly describing our respondents' attitudes about war termination, and how they relate observationally to their exposure to violence during the civil war in Syria. A detailed description of the questions in the survey instrument used to construct these variables are in the Appendix.

Table 1: Political Attitudes

Question	N	Mean
<i>Ideal ending:</i>		
Settle with Assad	1027	0.24
Removal of Assad	1036	0.81
Demilitarization	1009	0.56
Federation	1023	0.04
Partition	1047	0.04
Total endings chosen	961	1.68
<i>Expected ending:</i>		
Settlement with Assad	1003	0.23
Removal of Assad	967	0.80
Demilitarization	947	0.57
Partition	945	0.07
Federation	916	0.03
Total endings expected	876	1.70
<i>Other:</i>		
Will not return to Syria	1083	0.08

The table presents the mean values for a set of political attitudes asked in the survey. The number of observations differs because of missing values.

Table 1 provides means on a number of variables. The first group gives the proportion

of the sample choosing each of various proposed conflict outcomes as “ideal”.<sup>12</sup> The next group asks which outcomes participants expect. Finally we also show the proportion of respondents who say they will not return to Syria. As expected, our sample is heavily pro-opposition, as the mean values for the political attitude variables shows. About 81 percent of the sample sees Assad’s removal as an ideal resolution to the conflict, while only 24 percent sees settlement with Assad as an ideal outcome. It is also worth noting that the level of support for federation and partition is very low, about 4 percent. Finally, only 8 percent of our sample does not want to return to Syria under any circumstances. Hence, our sample consists of individuals who eventually plan to return to Syria, and will thereby play a role in the future of the country. This makes learning about their political attitudes towards negotiated settlement and compromise, and how these attitudes can be affected, critically important.

## 5.2 Experiment 1: Civilian vs. Military Proposers

For the analysis of Experiment 1, we simply collapse response categories into an *agree* category (including “strongly”- or “somewhat agree”) and a *disagree* category (including “somewhat”- or “strongly disagree”). We also collapse the two civilian messenger primes (a civilian non-combatant who has lost a limb during the war, and a civilian non-combatant) into one “civilian” category<sup>13</sup>.

Figure 3 shows the proportion who *agree* to a ceasefire, with 95% confidence intervals for each prime category. Hypothesis 1 was that respondents will be more in favor of ceasefire when it is another civilian calling for it as opposed to when an armed leader calls for it. We see this clearly: respondents are 11 percentage points more likely to agree to a ceasefire and peaceful negotiations when it is put forth by a fellow civilian than by a Syrian government commander ( $p = 0.002$ ), and 14 percentage points more likely than when an opposition commander makes the proposal ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Moving to hypothesis 1b, we note that our sample mostly consists of respondents who self-identify as pro-opposition, though there is a sizable minority who thinks that no side in the conflict represents them.<sup>14</sup> One possible explanation for the positive effect of the civilian proposer relative to even the opposition commander is that it is driven by the large minority of respondents in our sample who do not think that the opposition groups represent them. Hypothesis 1b thus asks: even among those individuals who identify closely with the opposition, do we still see higher support for the civilian-proposed arrangement than the one proposed by an opposition commander? Figure 4 shows results under each prime, now restricted to those who report identifying with opposition groups in Syria. Proposals made by a civilian draw greater support than those made by an opposition commander even in this subset of respondents, who might be expected to be most sympathetic to proposals made by the opposition commanders.

The uniquely persuasive nature of civilian-proposals is consistent with the varied theoretical motivations described above for attempting this manipulation. Seeing a civilian propose an agreement may ensure the respondent that agreeing to such a position will not be viewed as violating the group’s expectations, or worse, as raising suspicion of sympathies with the enemy. Alternatively, respondents may simply be influenced by civilians rather than elites because they are considered members of the same group and have had similar experiences (Platow et. al, 2005; Turner and Oakes, 1998). This argument is particularly relevant in a context where many respondents have suffered violence, and may thus be

---

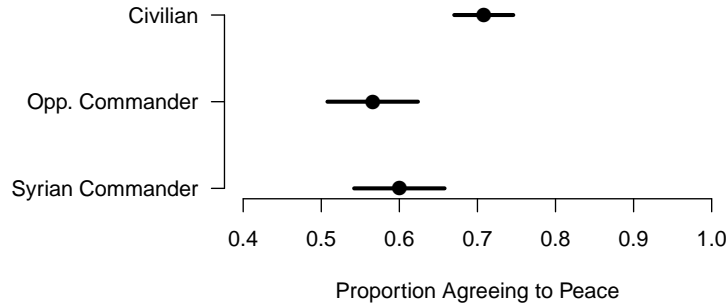
<sup>12</sup>The translation of “ideal” in this case connotes “a good outcome”, not the single best outcome. Hence participants can chose more than one outcome, as indicated by the variable “Total endings chosen”.

<sup>13</sup>Our results remain substantially unchanged if we keep these primes separate – the two groups are statistically indistinguishable, so collapsing them together aids in achieving statistical power.

<sup>14</sup>We asked in the survey which group in the conflict most closely represents the interests of the respondent. 72 percent say it is the opposition, while the rest almost exclusively says “no one”. Fewer than 0.5% said Assad’s government represents them.

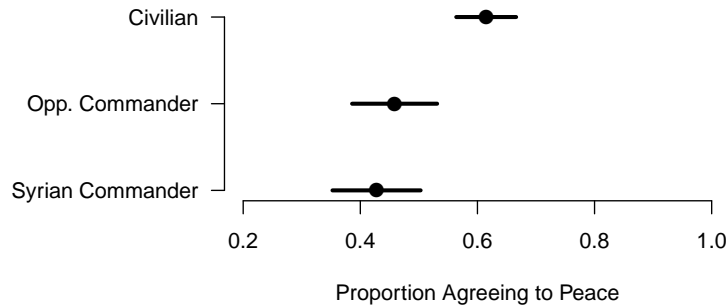
suspicious of claims made by military actors on either side. We next study how the framing of those violent experiences themselves influence willingness to compromise with the incumbent Assad regime.

Figure 3: Effect of Proposer on Agreement to a Ceasefire



Proportion of respondents willing to agree to “laying down arms and returning to a non-violent political process”, conveyed by either a civilian (Civilian), collapsing together injured and non-injured civilians), an opposition commander (Opp. Commander) or a commander with the government (Syrian Commander). Whiskers show 95% confidence intervals. Agreements proposed by civilians are more likely to be accepted than those proposed by commanders from either side.

Figure 4: Effect of Proposer on Agreement to a Ceasefire (Only Pro-Opposition Respondents)



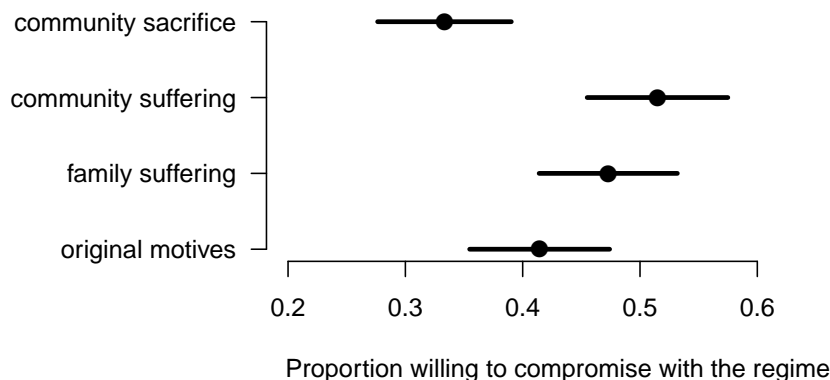
Proportion of respondents willing to agree to “laying down arms and returning to a non-violent political process”, conveyed by either a civilian (Civilian), collapsing together injured and non-injured civilians), an opposition commander (Opp. Commander) or a commander with the government (Syrian Commander), only among those who say opposition groups represent their interests. Whiskers show 95% confidence intervals.

### 5.3 Experiment 2: Framing Wartime Experiences

For analysis of Experiment 2, the outcome is coded as a 1 for participants that are willing to settle in some way with the regime to achieve peace (accepting a peace settlement regardless of who maintains control, or accepting a peace settlement that leaves some parts of the country under the Assad regime’s control). It is thus coded as 0 for the outcomes that do not involve any settling or compromise, insisting on removing the regime entirely.

It therefore encodes whether the respondent is willing to accept any settlement with the Assad regime, versus demanding a future that leaves the regime with no power. We then simply compute conditional means for this outcome variable by prime, which are shown with 95% confidence intervals in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Effects of primes on willingness to settle



Results of survey experiment on framing of losses. The outcome is 1 if participants accept a deal that settles with the regime, leaving it some power; it is 0 if they accept only outcomes that entirely remove the regime from power. Estimates show effect of each prime, relative to a prime reminding participants of the original motives for the rebellion.

Hypotheses 2a-2c are tested in Figure 5. Violence framed as *community sacrifice* made respondents less willing to settle with the regime compared to violence framed as *community suffering* or *family suffering*. Specifically, compared to those in the sacrifice condition, those in the *community suffering* and *family suffering* condition were 18 percentage points ( $p < 0.001$ ) and 14 percentage points ( $p < 0.001$ ) (H2b) more likely to approve of a settlement with the regime.

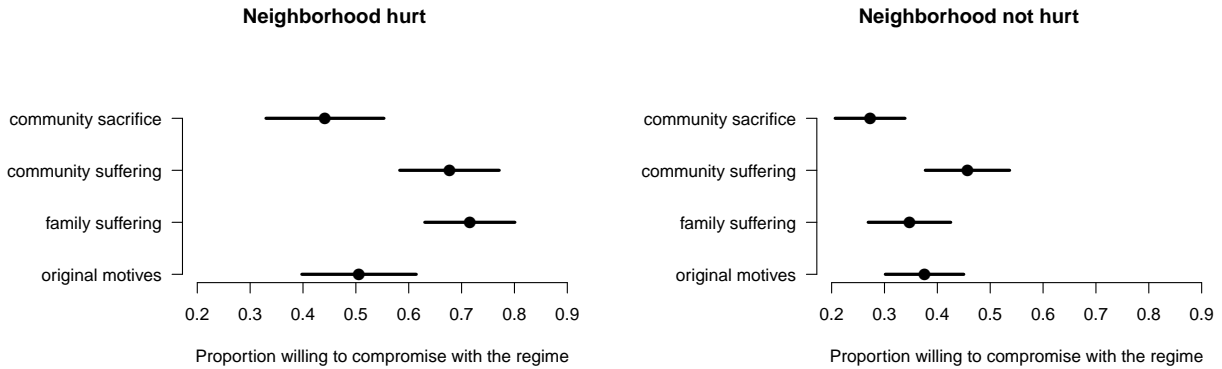
Finally, the prime to recall the original motives of the conflict produces a level of willingness marginally higher than *community sacrifice* (8 percentage points,  $p = 0.054$ ) (H2c), though still considerably lower than *community suffering* (10 percentage points,  $p = 0.02$ ). A prime to recall the original motives thus falls squarely in between the “sacrifice” and the “suffering” primes in terms of willingness to settle.

Next, it could be either that prior experience with the types of violent harms we reference makes the primes more salient, or that prior experience hardens attitudes, thus making them unlikely to be influenced by such primes. To test this, we split the sample according to whether individuals report that members of their neighborhood were injured or killed in the conflict (H3). Figure 6 shows results similar to Figure 5 but on these split samples. Among those who did have neighbors injured or killed (“neighborhood hurt”), compared to the *community sacrifice* prime, willingness to settle was 24 percentage points higher among those primed to *community suffering*, and 27 percentage points higher among those primed to *family suffering*. These point estimates are indeed larger (though not significantly so) than the corresponding effects in the sample without neighborhood members injured or killed (18 and 7 percentage points, respectively).

We thus find that prior experience with community loss does not detectably weaken, and may actually enhance, the effect of these primes on willingness to settle. It is also worth noticing that, while not a causally identified comparison, the overall willingness to settle is higher among those from the neighborhoods that have experienced losses.



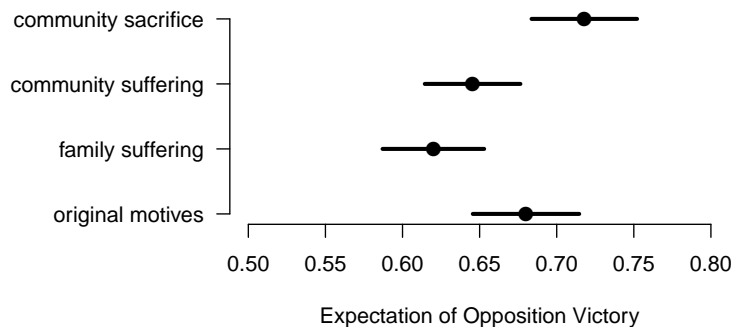
Figure 6: Effect of sacrifice and suffering primes on willingness to settle, by neighborhood exposure to violence



Results of survey experiment on framing of losses separately for those with members of their neighborhood who were injured or killed (*left*, N=376) and those who have no injured or killed members of their neighborhood (*right*, N=659). The outcome is 1 if participants accept a peace settlement that does not require defeat/removal of the regime, or 0 if they accept only outcomes that entirely remove the regime from power

Finally, while we do not specifically theorize about the role of these primes in affecting beliefs about the prospects for opposition victory, we are well positioned to test this, and it suggests a possible mechanism by which these primes might influence willingness to settle. Figure 7, provides a test of Hypothesis 4. The same primes that generated the lowest willingness to settle (i.e. *community sacrifice*) in prior analysis generate the highest optimism regarding the likelihood of victory for the opposition. Specifically, optimism for an opposition victory under the *community sacrifice* prime is 7 percentage points higher ( $p = 0.002$ ) than under the *community suffering* prime, and 10 percentage points higher ( $p < 0.001$ ) under the *family suffering* prime. The difference between *community sacrifice* and *original motives* is not significant at 4 percentage points ( $p = 0.13$ ).

Figure 7: Expectation of opposition victory depending on framing of loss



Mean probability that the opposition will defeat the regime, by prime. Optimism that the opposition will defeat the regime is far higher under the *community sacrifice* prime than either *community suffering* or *family suffering* prime.

This result suggests that framing violence as sacrifice not only increases demands for removal of Assad, but also increases optimism regarding the likelihood of this outcome. This raises an interesting question to be pursued in future work: does the *community sacrifice* prime, which emphasize sunk costs, increase demands for victory because it alters the way

respondents view conflict odds, making them more optimistic that victory is actually possible? Or does the prime simply increase demands for victory, after which participants later say they are more optimistic about that victory in order to maintain internal consistency? Or is a third factor responsible for both? Whatever the causal ordering, the surprisingly large effects of such subtle primes on both the optimism and demand for Assad’s complete removal from power suggests that the social framing of losses can powerfully alter the policies refugees will support to terminate conflicts.

## 6 Discussion and Conclusions

Civil wars are the dominant form of violence in the international system and they give rise to mass displacement, extremism and elicit economic activity that often spills well beyond the war theater (Melander et al., 2016). While political and military elites will strike bargains, the achievement of durable ceasefires, negotiated settlements, lasting peace and a return to normal life requires buy-in from refugee and other civilian communities. The effects of wartime experiences on civilians – especially in conflicts where the objective is not to control the population but to remove it – are not well understood. Although one may expect experiences with violence and displacement to produce obdurate attitudes regarding the acceptability of settling and making peace, our research suggests that these attitudes are surprisingly malleable. Specifically, we find that the identity of the person proposing a ceasefire as well as the way in which narratives of past violence are framed can strongly influence the types of compromises and settlements refugees are willing to accept.

When a ceasefire is proposed by civilians, it is deemed acceptable far more often than when proposed by armed groups from either the regime or the opposition. This finding is interesting for several reasons. First, elites – and especially military elites – are typically considered integral to securing durable peace settlements. These elites are the ones at the negotiating table, with much effort devoted to convincing them to lay down arms and accept settlements such as power-sharing agreements. Moreover, elites are also often assumed to have a degree of control over civilians and their expressed attitudes toward allies and enemies. However, looking to this particular group of refugees in Turkey – most of whom plan or hope to return home to Syria – it is civilian voices that more strongly influence them to accept a ceasefire compromise and return to peaceful negotiations. Even among participants who identify with the opposition, we find that civilian proposed agreements generate higher approval than those proposed by opposition commanders, suggesting that our finding does not merely reflect persuasion by those with similar political leadings. Such a result is consistent with several theoretical positions that motivated our experiment. First, under uncertainty, civilians may look for information or evidence from fellow civilians, particularly as they have experienced similar plights and are part of the same group, more so than can be said of military commanders on either side. Or, civilians may worry that expressing a desire for peace will violate community expectations or raise suspicion – both of which can be allayed by a civilian being the one to propose the agreement. Alternatively, civilians may also simply be wary of proposals made by military members on either side after suffering so much violence.

Our second main finding is that when wartime experience is characterized as *sacrifice*, respondents are far more likely to call for outright victory against the Assad regime, seeking to defeat or remove it. By contrast, characterizing these experiences as *suffering* leads to a greater willingness to settle, in this case, allowing the regime to retain some power. We further find that these narrative frames hold sway over reported attitudes as or more strongly among those who report experiencing great harm and therefore would be most expected to have firm beliefs and preferences. Again these results are consistent with several theoretical accounts. The word “sacrifice” may engage an escalation of commitment in participants’ thinking, making the idea of “giving up” (by agreeing to a settlement) less palatable. It may also lead respondents to feel that settling would be seen as a betrayal

of the community and what it has fought for. By contrast the word “suffering” may raise the salience of what the violence has cost individuals, their families, and their communities, without emphasizing what was intended to be gained. This may engender heightened “weariness” and a desire to see that cost come to an end.

Finally, these primes also have an effect on reported optimism regarding prospects for an opposition victory. Respondents primed to think about their wartime experience as *sacrifice* are more optimistic that the opposition will be victorious over the incumbent regime, compared to those primed to think of these experiences as *suffering*. We do not claim a causal ordering of these effects. It could be that this increased optimism a) leads to a lower willingness to settle; b) that the lower willingness to settle comes first and participants update their optimism in order to maintain consistency; or that c) some other effect of the primes leads to both outcomes. These possibilities suggest promising routes for future research on the role of optimism in these attitudes.

Taken together, our research here suggests that subtle features such as who proposes an agreement and the narrative framing of wartime experiences can have a substantial impact on whether refugees are likely to get behind efforts towards war termination via a negotiated settlement. While future work is required to distinguish between the different theoretical accounts we offer for these findings, our hope is that by casting attention on the malleability of attitudes, future work can be designed precisely to distinguish the mechanisms for these surprisingly large and powerful effects.

Our findings also have immediate practical implications for the design of efforts to end conflicts through lasting peaceful settlements. Experiment 1 suggests that focusing negotiations entirely around military elites may be unproductive, as elite agreements may only solve the immediate problem. If large segments of the population are unpersuaded that a peace settlement is desirable, it can pave the way for new entrepreneurs to mobilize forces and spoil the arrangement. Working with representative civilians, and especially refugee civilians, can be one important component in a process that ensures more durable ceasefires and negotiated settlements. Our second experiment serves not only to show the surprising malleability of attitudes toward settlement and compromise, but also to specifically understand that the framing of wartime experiences – as sacrifice or as suffering – is one powerful influence on those attitudes which could be employed in public discussion and dialogue processes. Further, rather than viewing refugees as either irrelevant or as potential spoilers (or even as future extremists), this work finds reasons for hope. Even refugees who have lost a great deal as a result of regime atrocities *can* be moved towards compromise with the incumbent regime. At a time when previously welcoming host countries like Turkey are now calling upon refugees to return to Syria, despite the fact that Assad remains in power, narratives about the conflict and how they are framed will become all the more important.

## References

- AFAD (2013). Syrian refugees in turkey, 2013. Available online at [https://www.afad.gov.tr/upload/Node/2376/files/61-2013123015505-syrian-refugees-in-turkey-2013\\_print\\_12\\_11\\_2013\\_eng.pdf](https://www.afad.gov.tr/upload/Node/2376/files/61-2013123015505-syrian-refugees-in-turkey-2013_print_12_11_2013_eng.pdf).
- Alzoubi, Z. (2017). Syrian civil society during the peace talks in geneva: Role and challenges. *New England Journal of Public Policy*, 29(1):1–4.
- Amnesty International (2015). Death everywhere: War crimes and human rights abuses in aleppo, syria. Available online at [http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/embargoed\\_5\\_may\\_aleppo\\_report\\_death\\_everywhere.pdf](http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/embargoed_5_may_aleppo_report_death_everywhere.pdf).
- Araabi, S. and Hilal, L. (2016). Reconciliation, reward, and revenge: Analyzing syrian deescalation dynamics through local ceasefire negotiations. Available online at [http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Papers/AraabiHilal\\_SyrianLocalCeasefireNegotiations.pdf](http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Papers/AraabiHilal_SyrianLocalCeasefireNegotiations.pdf).
- Arkes, H. R. and Blumer, C. (1985). The psychology of sunk cost. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 35(1):124–140.
- Bauer, M., Blattman, C., Chytilova, J., Henrich, J., Miguel, E., and Mitts, T. (2016). Can war foster cooperation? NBER Working Paper 22312.
- Boettcher III, W. A. and Cobb, M. D. (2009). “don’t let them die in vain” casualty frames and public tolerance for escalating commitment in iraq. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53(5):677–697.
- Canetti, D., Elad-Strenger, J., Lavi, I., Guy, D., and Bar-Tal, D. (2017). Exposure to violence, ethos of conflict, and support for compromise: Surveys in israel, east jerusalem, west bank, and gaza. *Journal of conflict resolution*, 61(1):84–113.
- Christia, F. (2012). *Alliance formation in civil wars*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cialdini, R. (2001). Harnessing the science of persuasion. *Harvard Business Review*, pages 72–81.
- Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A. (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56:563–95.
- Corstange, D. and York, E. (2017). Sectarian framing in the syrian civil war.
- De Juan, A. and Bank, A. (2015). The ba’athist blackout? selective goods provision and political violence in the syrian civil war. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(1):91–104.
- Dean, R. (2015). Remittances to syria: What works, where, and how. Available online at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2015-07-nrc---remittances-to-syria---report-final-%281%29.pdf>.
- Dietz-Uhler, B. (1996). The escalation of commitment in political decision-making groups: a social identity approach. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 26(4):611–629.
- Elu, J. and Price, G. N. (2012). Remittances and the financing of terrorism in sub-saharan africa: 1974-2006. *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, 18(1):1–40.
- Erdogan, M. (2017). Syrians barometer. Unpublished manuscript available online at <https://mmuraterdogan.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/syrians-barometer-executive-summary.pdf>.

- Fearon, J. D. and Latin, D. D. (2008). Civil war termination. Unpublished manuscript.
- Gayer, C. C., Landman, S., Halperin, E., and Bar-Tal, D. (2009). Overcoming psychological barriers to peaceful conflict resolution: The role of arguments about losses. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53(6):951–975.
- Grossman, Guy, M. D. and Miodownik, D. (2015). The political legacies of combat: Attitudes toward war and peace among israeli ex-combatants. *International Organization*, 69(4):981–1009.
- Hartzell, C. A. (2018). Civil war termination. In Thompson, W. R., editor, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Empirical International Relations Theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Hazlett, C. (2016). Angry or weary? the effect of physical violence on attitudes towards peace in darfur. *Working Paper*.
- Hirsch-Hoefler, S., Canetti, D., Rapaport, C., and Hobfoll, S. E. (2016). Conflict will harden your heart: Exposure to violence, psychological distress, and peace barriers in israel and palestine. *British Journal of Political Science*, 46(4):845–859.
- Hokayem, E. (2013). *Syria's Uprising and The Fracturing of the Levant*. Routledge.
- Hurwitz, J. (1989). Presidential leadership and public followership. *Manipulating public opinion: Essays on public opinion as a dependent variable*, pages 222–50.
- Kahneman, D. and Tversky, A. (1984). Choices, values, and frames. *American Psychologist*, 39(4):341–350.
- Kalyvas, S. N. (2006). *The logic of violence in civil war*. Cambridge Univ Press.
- Karakus, D. C. and Svensson, I. (2017). Between the bombs: Exploring partial ceasefires in the syrian civil war, 2011–2017. *Terrorism and Political Violence*. published on-line.
- Kirisci, K. (2014). Syrian refueges and turkey's challenges: Going beyond hospitality. Available online at <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Syrian-Refugees-and-Turkeys-Challenges-May-14-2014.pdf>.
- Krause, D. (2017). Who wants peace?-the role of exposure to violence in explaining public support for negotiated agreements: A quantitative analysis of the colombian peace agreement referendum in 2016.
- Kydd, A. H. and Walter, B. F. (2002). Sabotaging the peace: The politics of extremist violence. *International Organization*, 56(2).
- Levy, J. S. (1992). An introduction to prospect theory. *Political Psychology*, pages 171–186.
- Levy, J. S. and Morgan, T. C. (1986). The war-weariness hypothesis: An empirical test. *American Journal of Political Science*, pages 26–49.
- Lynch, M. (2016). *The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East*. Public Affairs.
- Maoz, Z. (1990). Framing the national interest: The manipulation of foreign policy decisions in group settings. *World Politics*, 43(1):77–110.
- McDermott, R. (2004). Prospect theory in political science: Gains and losses from the first decade. *Political Psychology*, 25(2):289–312.
- McHugo, J. (2014). *Syria: From the Great War to Civil War*. Saqi Books.

- Melander, E., Pettersson, T., and Themnér, L. (2016). Organized violence, 1989-2015. *Journal of Peace Research*, 53(5):217–242.
- Morjé Howard, L. and Stark, A. (2017). How civil wars end: The international system, norms, and the role of external actors. *International Security*, 42(3):127–171.
- Newman, E. and Richmond, O. P. (2006). Obstacles to peace processes: Understanding spoiling. In Newman, E. and Richmond, O. P., editors, *Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers During Conflict Resolution*. United Nations University Press.
- Nisbett, R. E. and Cohen, D. (1996). *Culture of honor: the psychology of violence in the south*. Westview Press.
- Petersen, R. D. (2002). *Understanding ethnic violence: Fear, hatred, and resentment in twentieth-century Eastern Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Phillips, C. (2016). *The Battle for Syria: International Rivalry in the New Middle East*. Yale University Press.
- Platow et. al, M. J. (2005). “it’s not funny if they’re laughing”: Self-categorization, social influence, and responses to canned laughter. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, pages 542–550.
- Regan, P. M. and Frank, R. W. (2014). Migrant remittances and the onset of civil war. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 31(5):502–20.
- Salehyan, I. (2007). Transnational rebels: neighboring states as sanctuary for rebel groups. *World Politics*, 59(2):217–242.
- Salehyan, I. (2009). *Rebels without borders: transnational insurgencies in world politics*. Cornell University Press.
- Salehyan, I. and Gleditsch, K. (2006). Refugees and the spread of civil war. *International Organization*, 60(2):335–366.
- Scheufele, D. A. and Iyengar, S. (2012). The state of framing research: A call for new directions. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication Theories*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Scheufele, D. A. and Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing, agenda setting, and priming: The evolution of three media effects models. *Journal of communication*, 57(1):9–20.
- Schott, J. P., Scherer, L. D., and Lambert, A. J. (2011). Casualties of war and sunk costs: Implications for attitude change and persuasion. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 47(6):1134–1145.
- SOHR (2017). [Online at <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=70012>; accessed 17-August-2017].
- Staw, B. M. (1976). Knee-deep in the big muddy: A study of escalating commitment to a chosen course of action. *Organizational behavior and human performance*, 16(1):27–44.
- Stedman, J. J. (1997). Spoiler problems in peace processes. *International Security*, 22(2):5–53.
- Thaler, R. H. and Johnson, E. J. (1990). Gambling with the house money and trying to break even: The effects of prior outcomes on risky choice. *Management science*, 36(6):643–660.

- Toft, M. (2009). *Securing the Peace: The Durable Settlement of Civil Wars*. Princeton University Press.
- Turner, J. (1991). *Social Influence*. Open University Press.
- Turner, J. C. and Oakes, P. J. (1998). Self-categorization theory and social influence. In Paulus, P. B., editor, *The Psychology of Group Influence*, pages 233–275. Erlbaum, 2 edition. An optional note.
- UNHCR (2017). Syria regional refugee response. [Online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>; accessed 17-August-2017].
- Varshney, A. (2003). *Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. Yale University Press.
- Weber, M. and Zuchel, H. (2005). How do prior outcomes affect risk attitude? comparing escalation of commitment and the house-money effect. *Decision Analysis*, 2(1):30–43.
- Zaller, J. (1992). *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge university press.
- Zena, T. (2017). The voices missing from syria’s peace talks. [Online at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/03/syria-war-missing-voices-syria-peace-talks-170322073131728.html>; posted 23-March-2017].
- Åkebo, M. (2016). *Ceasefire Agreements and Peace Processes: A Comparative Study*. Routledge.