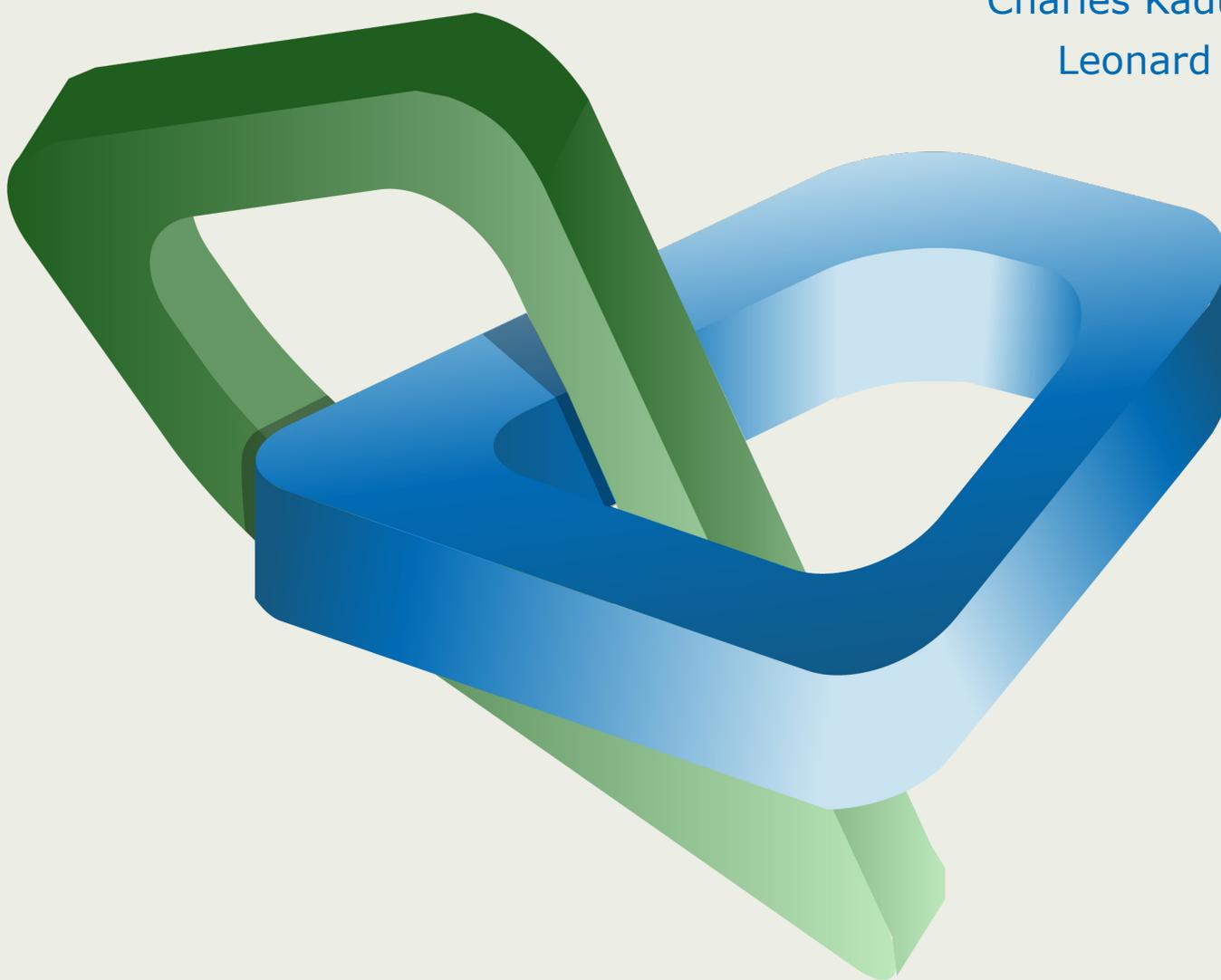


Brandeis University

Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

Still Connected:
American Jewish Attitudes about Israel

Theodore Sasson
Benjamin Phillips
Charles Kadushin
Leonard Saxe



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Brandeis University
Mailstop 014
Waltham, MA 02454-9110
781.736.2060
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Executive Summary

Recent events, including the Gaza war, West Bank settlement freeze, and flotilla incident, have intensified discussion of Israel in the press and among American Jews. According to some, these events are contributing to a widening schism between American Jews and Israel, in particular among young adults and liberals.

To assess American Jewish views about Israel, a survey was conducted in June 2010 of more than 1,200 individuals who were identified as Jewish in a large national panel. The survey explores American Jewish attachment to Israel, in particular in the younger generation, and examines responses to a number of issues. The results of the survey included the following:

Attachment to Israel

- Sixty-three percent of respondents felt “very much” or “somewhat” connected to Israel. Seventy-five percent agreed that caring about Israel is an important part of their Jewish identities. The findings, when compared to earlier surveys asking similar questions, indicate overall stability in American Jewish attachment to Israel over the past quarter-century.
- Respondents under age 45 were less likely to feel connected to Israel but no less likely to regard Israel as important to their Jewish identities. Insofar as age differences are not new—younger respondents have been less attached to Israel in surveys conducted at regular intervals over the past 24 years—the study attributes such differences to *stages of the lifecycle* rather than *generational turnover*.
- Political differences on the liberal-to-conservative continuum were unrelated to measures of attachment to Israel. Liberals felt no less connected than conservatives and were no less likely to regard Israel as important to their Jewish identities. These observations hold true for both younger and older respondents.
- Respondents under age 30 were more likely to have been to Israel than respondents age 30-59. Travel to Israel is an important factor strengthening attachment to Israel.

Flotilla Incident

- Seventy-two percent of respondents agreed with the official Israeli interpretation of the incident, compared to 9 percent who agreed with the official Turkish interpretation.
- Sixty-one percent of respondents blamed “pro-Palestinian activists” for the incident; 10 percent blamed Israel. An identical question was recently posed to a sample of likely U.S. voters. Although U.S. voters as a whole tended to blame the activists, American Jews were more likely to do so (and less likely to blame the Israelis).
- Seventy percent of respondents did not believe the incident had any effect on their attachment to Israel. Of those who believed that it did have an effect, two-thirds believed it made them feel more attached.
- Conservative respondents were more likely to endorse the Israeli interpretation of the incident, blame the pro-Palestinian

activists, and feel that the incident strengthened attachment to Israel. Older respondents were more likely to endorse the Israeli interpretation of the incident and feel that it strengthened attachment, but were no more likely to blame pro-Palestinian activists.

U.S.-Israel Relationship

- Fifty-two percent of respondents characterized the current level of U.S. support for Israel as “about right”; 39 percent felt it was too little and 9 percent too much. Compared to a sample of likely U.S. voters who were recently asked the same question, American Jews were much less likely to regard the current level of U.S. support as too much. Conservative respondents were more likely to regard the U.S. as not supportive enough; younger respondents were more likely to regard the current level of support as “about right.”
- Twenty-five percent of respondents approved—and 37 percent disapproved—of President Obama’s handling of the U.S.-Israel relationship. Similarly, 25 percent approved—and 31 percent disapproved—of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s handling of the relationship. Conservative and younger respondents were more likely to approve of Netanyahu’s handling of the relationship; liberal and older respondents were more likely to approve of Obama’s handling of the relationship.

Settlements and Jerusalem

- Thirty percent of respondents favored dismantling some West Bank settlements in the context of a peace deal; 28 percent favored dismantling none and 16 percent all.
- Fifty-one percent of respondents opposed—and 29 percent supported—compromising on Jerusalem’s status as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction.
- Conservative respondents were more likely to oppose dismantling settlements and compromise on Jerusalem. Younger respondents were more likely to oppose compromise on Jerusalem; there were no age differences on West Bank settlements.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study challenge the view of a widening schism between American Jews and Israel. A majority of American Jews feels attached to Israel and the overall level of attachment has remained stable for nearly a quarter of a century. Younger Jews are somewhat less attached in the current survey, but age differences most likely indicate that attachment to Israel increases over the life course rather than declines across the generations. Political ideology is not related to feelings of attachment to Israel, and events like the flotilla incident have thusfar had no observable impact. Travel to Israel is a major factor in attachment, and younger Jews in the current survey are more likely to have visited Israel.

American Jews clash over conflicting assessments of Israeli policies and visions of Israel's future. These disagreements, however, have not been cause for alienation in any obvious segment of the American Jewish community. Perhaps it is a measure of attachment that debate about Israel's policies has transfixed the American Jewish community.

Introduction

A number of recent political and strategic developments have strained the relationship between the United States and Israel and prompted debate among American Jews. The 2008 Gaza war engendered widespread debate over Israel's war objectives and the protection of civilians in zones of conflict. President Obama's demand that Israel freeze construction in West Bank settlements and East Jerusalem was opposed by some Jewish organizations and supported by others. The U.N. Human Rights Commission's Goldstone report on the Gaza war, although bitterly denounced as biased by many Jewish organizations, was widely discussed in the community. More recently, Israel's interdiction of a flotilla of ships bringing supplies to Gaza renewed debate in the Jewish community and beyond over the Gaza embargo. What has been the cumulative impact of these events and political developments on American Jewish feelings and views about Israel? Do American Jews still feel connected to Israel?

The question is made more urgent by long-term trends that some analysts suggest are leading to a fissure in the relationship of American Jews to Israel. In a prominent article in the *New York Review of Books* this past May, journalism professor Peter Beinart claimed that the younger generation of American Jews is becoming increasingly alienated from Israel which it perceives as "a regional hegemon and occupying power" (Beinart 2010). In contrast to their parents' generation, which lived through the Six Day and Yom Kippur wars and continues to view Israel as a democratic, secular state, today's young adults are "more conscious...of the degree to which Israeli behavior violates liberal ideals, and less willing to grant Israel an

exemption because its survival seems in peril" (Ibid.). As a consequence, "in the younger generation, fewer and fewer American Jewish liberals are Zionists; fewer and fewer American Jewish Zionists are liberals" (Ibid.).

Beinart's essay galvanized interest because it corroborated a sense, encouraged by other commentators and social scientists, that American Jews are increasingly divided about Israel along generational and political lines. The evidence to support this view is more complex than is generally understood. Systematic research has generally not found that liberals are growing more distant from Israel. In recent studies (Cohen and Kelman 2007; Perlmann 2007; Sasson, Kadushin, and Saxe 2010) political ideology has not been a significant factor in determining emotional connection to Israel.

The evidence regarding generational trends is more ambiguous. Most studies report age-cohort differences in emotional attachment to Israel, with younger age groups expressing lower levels of attachment (e.g., Ament 2005; Cohen 1989; Cohen and Kelman 2007; Phillips, Lengyel, and Saxe 2002; Sasson et al. 2010; Ukeles, Miller, and Beck 2006). Some researchers attribute this tendency to the increasing temporal distance of succeeding cohorts from the Holocaust, founding of the state, and Six Day War; that is, they view it as a *generational* phenomenon (Ament 2005; Wexler 2007). Age cohort differences are, however, evident in surveys dating back to the mid-1980s. This observation, together with evidence of overall stability in the level of attachment over time, weighs in favor of an alternative explanation which views attachment as increasing over the life course,

that is, as a *lifecycle* phenomenon (Sasson, Kadushin, and Saxe 2008; Sasson et al. 2010).

The evidence regarding American Jewish political opinion about Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is more straightforward. Political ideology, as measured by surveys on a liberal to conservative continuum, is strongly associated with political views about Israel. Thus, for example, conservatives are more likely to oppose and liberals to support dismantling West Bank settlements in a peace deal (Perlmann 2007). Religiosity is also a key factor in the distribution of political opinions, with Orthodox respondents and respondents who attend religious services regularly tending to express more hawkish opinions (Sasson 2009; Sasson et al. 2008). The relationship between age and political opinion is less clear-cut; younger respondents are more likely to view Israel as an “occupying power” (Cohen and Kelman 2007), but no more likely to favor dismantling settlements or dividing

Jerusalem in the context of a peace deal (Perlmann 2007; Sasson et al. 2008).

To assess the claim that American Jews and, in particular, young adults, are becoming estranged from Israel, the present report describes new data collected from a panel of American Jews. The primary goal is to examine the attachment of American Jews to Israel, comparing today’s population to the population in the past and analyzing the impact of age and ideology. Data collection for the study was conducted in the immediate aftermath of the flotilla incident, which resulted in the death of nine Turkish activists. Accordingly, the study also examines responses to this incident, comparing American Jewish views to those expressed by the broader American public. In addition, the study examines questions about the U.S.-Israel relationship and the future of Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Methods

This report is based on a survey of Americans who identify as Jewish by religion or by other criteria.¹ The sampling frame is a national panel of 50,000 U.S. households developed by Knowledge Networks (KN). The survey used random digit dialing (RDD) and address-based sampling (ABS) to achieve a representative sample (see Appendix A for additional details regarding methods used). This approach is preferable to techniques that rely on volunteers who have internet access (e.g., Cohen and Kelman 2007; Gerstein 2008, 2009, 2010).² The survey was conducted in June 2010 (see Appendix D for survey instrument).

Sampling Frame

Jewish respondents were initially identified by a question about religion. In addition, two items were asked of panel members of no religion in March 2010: whether respondents considered themselves Jewish for any reason and whether they had a Jewish mother or father. In total, 1,389 respondents were

identified in the KN sample as Jewish by religion or some other criterion. A small number of individuals who gave their Jewish denomination as another religion were removed from the sample, as were those who responded that they were not Jewish to the second question of the survey. In total, the sample eligible for analysis consisted of 1,243 respondents, of whom 1,089 were Jewish by religion and 154 were Jewish by other criteria (See Appendix A for full discussion).

Field Operations

The survey was fielded between June 15, 2010 and June 26, 2010 by KN via its web platform. All surveys were conducted via the web. Incentives were offered within the normal structure of KN's incentives for panel members; no survey-specific incentives were offered. The study completion rate (COMR; Callegaro and DiSogra 2008) from the sampling frame described above was 85.7 percent (n=1,191 respondents from the frame).

Results

The results of the survey are summarized below, beginning with a discussion of responses to measures related to attachment to Israel. Then, survey results regarding the flotilla incident are described, including an analysis of its impact on attachment. The results summary concludes with a discussion of political attitudes on a number of issues, including the U.S.-Israel relationship and the future of West Bank settlements and Jerusalem.

Attachment to Israel

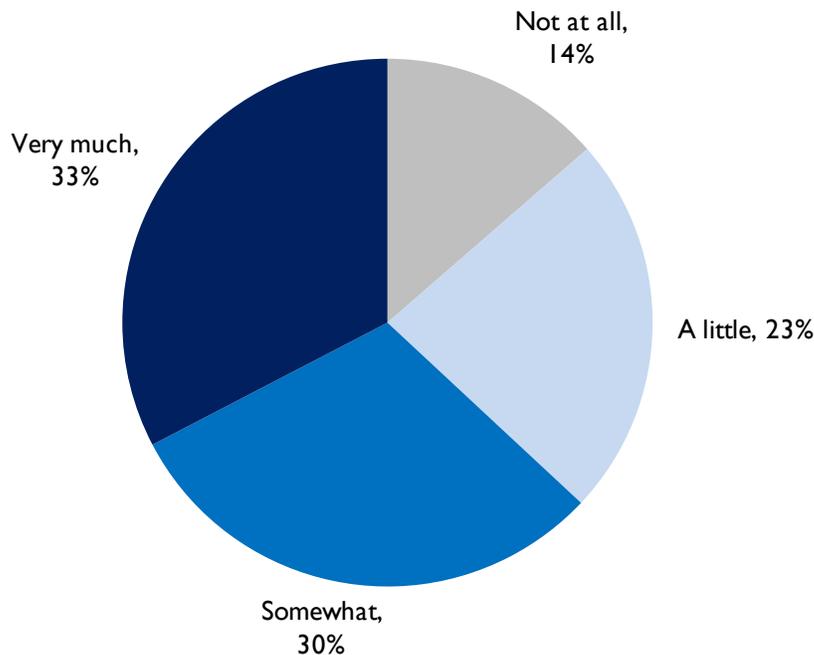
Much recent discussion in the Jewish and Israeli press has focused on trends in American Jewish attachment to Israel, in particular on whether American Jews' sense

of connection to Israel is waning. Attachment to Israel has a number of dimensions, and the survey asked a number of relevant questions. This section describes respondents' sense of connection to Israel, the importance of Israel in their Jewish identities, and their travel to Israel. We examine the views of respondents as a whole and then focus in particular on the impact of age and political ideology.

Feeling Connected to Israel

To tap into feelings of emotional attachment, we asked to what extent respondents feel a connection to Israel. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63 percent) reported feeling “very much” or “somewhat” connected with Israel (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Connection to Israel



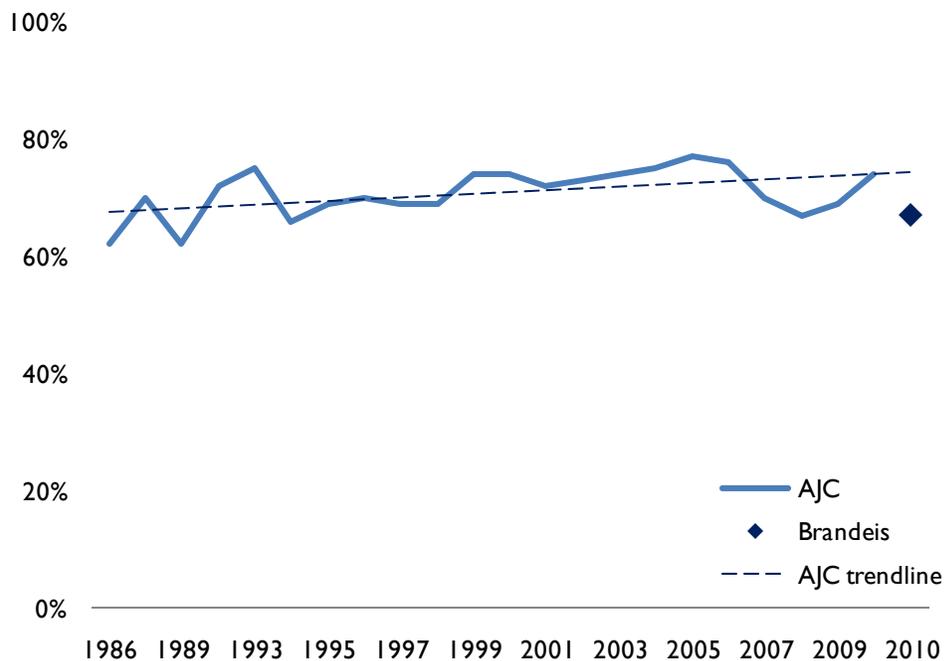
Note: “To what extent do you feel a connection to Israel? Not at all; a little; somewhat; very much.”

To place this finding in historical perspective, the responses can be compared to the American Jewish Committee (AJC) Survey of American Jewish Opinion. Conducted annually (with a few exceptions) between 1986 and 2010, the AJC survey asked similar questions of Jews who identify by religion. Figure 2 shows the proportion of respondents from the current survey who are very/somewhat connected to Israel superimposed upon the AJC trend data. For the sake of consistency, the figure from the current survey, 67 percent, is for Jews by religion only. The wording of the AJC question is slightly

different from the wording in the current survey (see note to Figure 2 for wording), but the results show remarkable stability over time, both within the AJC time series and between the AJC time series and the current survey.

To understand why there is stability in an era characterized by political instability, we also examined factors that predict attachment to Israel. (See Appendix B for tabulations of all variables.) As in previous surveys (Cohen and Kelman 2007; Perlmann 2007; Sasson et al. 2008), political ideology has no bearing on

Figure 2. Connection to Israel by Year (% Fairly/Somewhat or Very)



Notes: Data for 1986-2010 from American Jewish Committee Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion. Data for 2010 from Knowledge Networks sample, Jewish by religion respondents only. AJC wording 1986-88: "How close do you feel to Israel? Very close; fairly close; not very close." AJC wording 1989-2010: "How close do you feel to Israel? Very close; fairly close; fairly distant; very distant." Brandeis wording: "To what extent do you feel a connection to Israel? Not at all; a little; somewhat; very much."

feelings of connection to Israel. Liberals in the current survey report feeling just as connected, on average, as do moderates and conservatives. This is true of the survey population as a whole as well as for the subpopulation of young adults.

In relation to age, however, there are significant differences (Figure 3). The general pattern is for connection to be higher among older adults. Although the 18- to 29-year-old group appears to be more Israel-connected than the adjacent 30- to 44-year-old group, the small number of cases (97 in the younger group) means that this difference is not statistically significant. The statistically significant age-effect is the increase between the 18- to 44-year-olds and the 45 and over

group. We explore the significance of this age-effect in the discussion section, below.

To assess more comprehensively the factors in respondents' backgrounds that were related to feeling connected to Israel, regression analyses were developed (see Appendix C). Holding all other variables constant, feeling connected to Israel increases with age, travel to Israel, religious observance (attendance at religious services), and religious background (level of family observance during high school). Feeling connected to Israel decreases with parental intermarriage and secular educational attainment (i.e., from high school degree to graduate degree).

Figure 3. Connection to Israel by Age

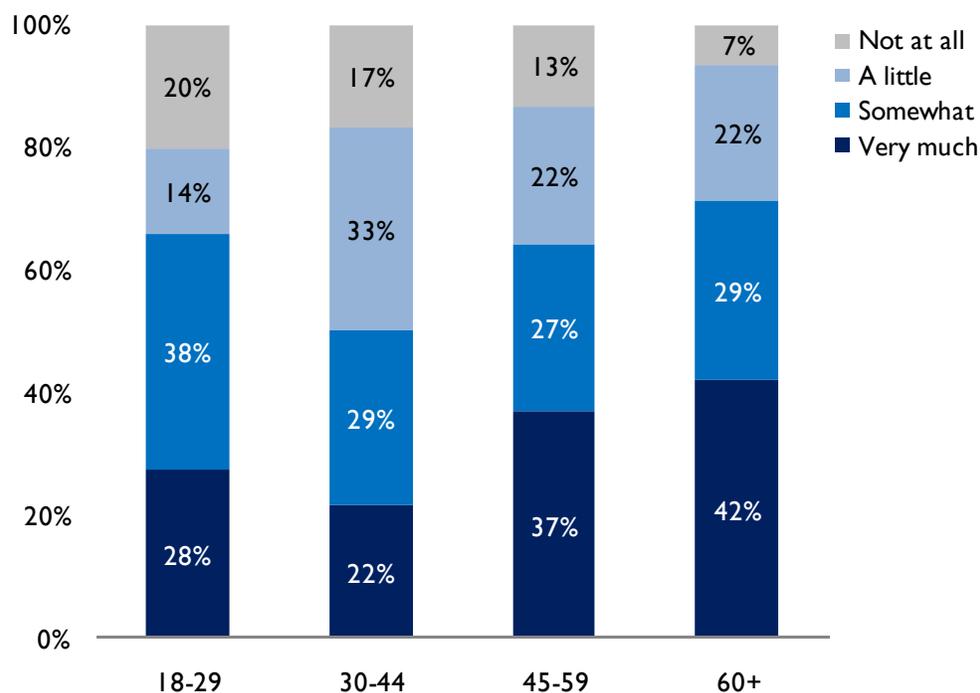
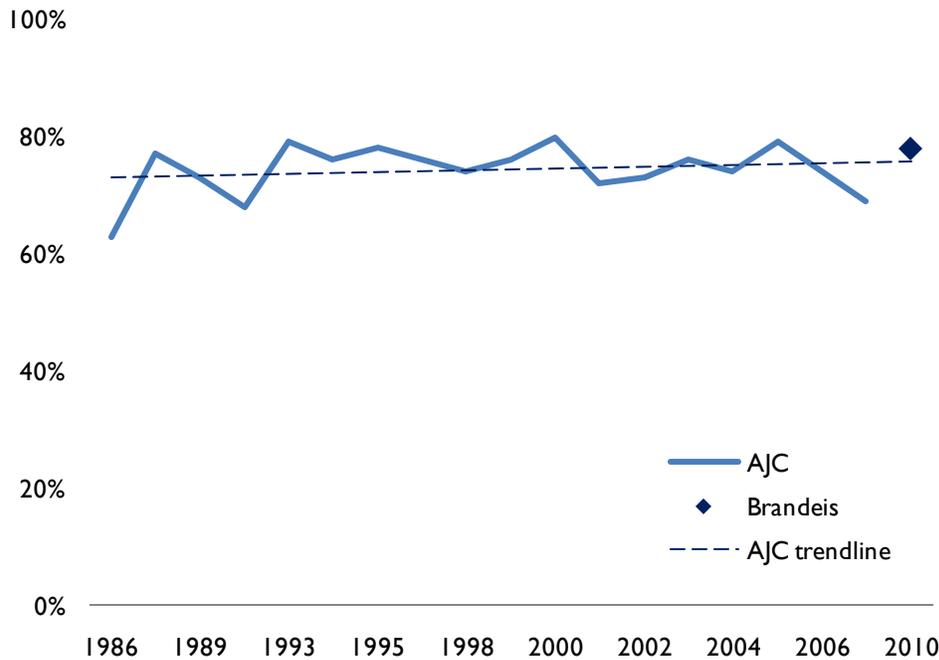


Figure 4. Caring About Israel (% agree)



Notes: Data for 1986-2007 from American Jewish Committee Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion. Data for 2010 from Knowledge Networks sample, Jewish by religion respondents only. “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being Jewish.”

Caring about Israel

Another measure of attachment to Israel derives from a question posed in dozens of previous surveys, including the AJC’s annual surveys and the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01. Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: “Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew.” Overall, 75 percent of respondents agreed with the statement.

To place this finding in historical perspective, we focus on the subpopulation of Jews by religion and consult the AJC annual surveys (as above). In the current survey, 78 percent

of Jews by religion agreed with the statement, placing the 2010 data point in the middle of the trend line (Figure 4). This finding suggests remarkable stability with respect to the importance of Israel in the identities of American Jews.

Younger respondents were no less likely than older respondents to regard caring about Israel as important to their Jewish identities. In other words, age is not a significant factor in relation to caring about Israel *vis à vis* one’s Jewish identity. Political ideology, as well, is not related to caring about Israel; self-identified liberals were no less likely than self-identified conservatives to regard caring about Israel as important to their Jewish identities.

In the regression analysis (Appendix C), with all other variables held constant, caring about Israel increases with religious observance (measured by frequency of attending services) and decreases with parental intermarriage.

Travel to Israel

In addition to caring and feeling connected, American Jews assert their ties to Israel by visiting the country. Overall, 36 percent of respondents to the current survey (and 39 percent of Jews by religion) report having been to Israel. This is comparable to recent surveys.³

Political ideology is not a factor in travel to Israel. Notably, however, age is significantly related to Israel travel, with both younger and older respondents being the most likely to

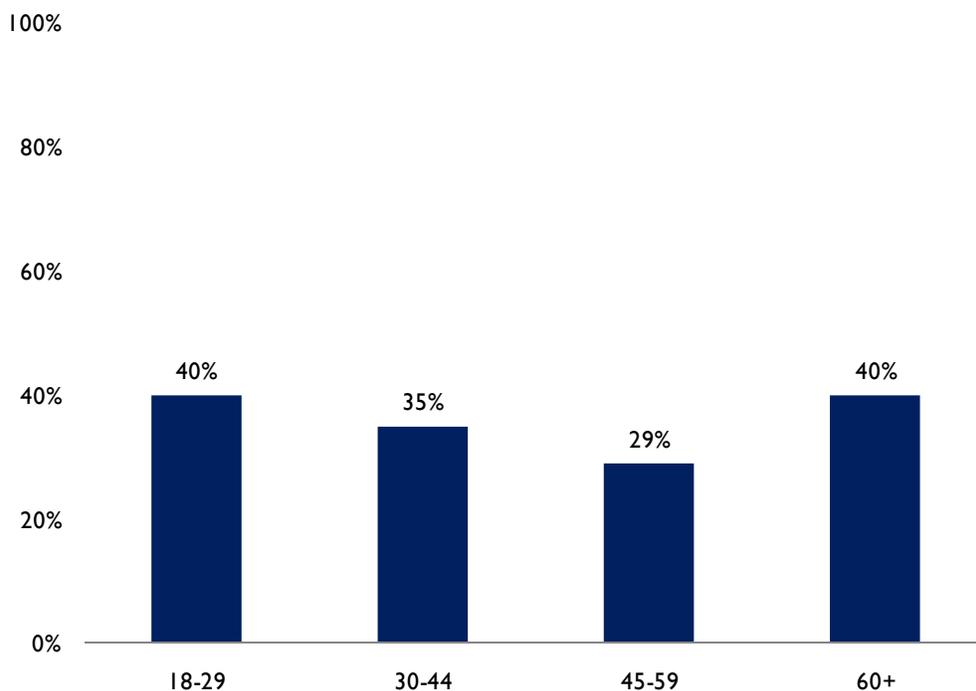
have visited the country and respondents in the middle of the age spectrum the least likely (Figure 5).⁴

In regression analysis (Appendix C), with all other variables held constant, travel to Israel increases with secular education, religious observance, day school education, belonging to a Jewish organization, and being female. Travel to Israel decreases with parental intermarriage. As discussed previously, the youngest and oldest respondents were the most likely to have been to Israel.

Flotilla Incident

The flotilla incident provides an opportunity to study the dynamics of American Jewish opinion in relation to a particular case. How does American Jewish support for Israel

Figure 5. Traveled to Israel by Age



compare to that of the broader American population? What role do age and political ideology play in shaping opinions about particular events?

Framing the Incident: Israeli vs. Turkish Statements

In order to assess respondents' views of the flotilla incident, we presented two statements—one modeled on claims of Israeli officials and the other on claims of Turkish officials—and asked respondents with which statement they agreed more:⁵

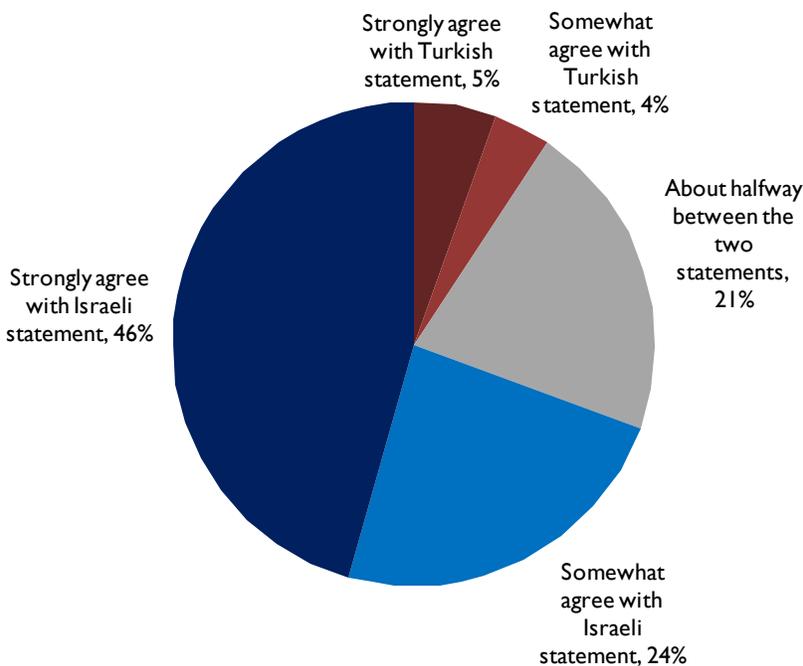
Question: On May 31, 2010, Israeli forces boarded a Turkish ship carrying supplies to Gaza. Nine people on the ship were killed in the ensuing violence. Here are two statements about the incident. Which of these two statements do you agree with more? [Statements rotated]

Statement One: The incident was the result of intentional provocation. Israel boarded the ship to prevent the flow of weapons to Hamas terrorists in Gaza. The Israeli soldiers were attacked when they boarded and had to defend themselves.

Statement Two: The incident was the result of Israel's violation of international law. Israel boarded a ship carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza. The Israeli soldiers made an unprovoked attack on innocent civilians.

Respondents as a whole were much more likely to agree with the Israeli statement; 70 percent either agreed somewhat or strongly with the Israeli statement (Figure 6). In contrast, just 9 percent agreed somewhat or strongly with the Turkish statement.

Figure 6. View of Flotilla Incident



Age and political ideology were both significantly related to responses. Older respondents were more likely to strongly agree with the Israeli statement; younger respondents were more likely to choose “halfway between” the two statements (Figure 7). More politically conservative respondents were more likely to agree with the Israeli statement (Figure 8).

With all other variables held constant (see Appendix C), agreement with the Israeli statement increases with age, political conservatism, travel to Israel, and religious observance.

Assigning Blame

Shortly after the flotilla incident, the polling firm Rasmussen conducted a survey of likely

U.S. voters to assess their response (Rasmussen 2010). Rasmussen asked respondents whether they blamed Israel or pro-Palestinian activists for the deadly outcome of the flotilla interdiction. In order to make possible a comparison to the broader population, we adopted Rasmussen’s question for our survey of American Jews. To ensure comparable samples, we included only the 87 percent of respondents from our survey who indicated that they would be likely to vote in the 2010 congressional election.

Although respondents to both surveys were far more likely to blame the incident on pro-Palestinian activists than on Israel, American Jews were more likely to do so than the general population (Figure 9). Just 10 percent of Jewish likely voters believed that Israel was mainly to blame for the flotilla incident.

Figure 7. View of Flotilla Incident by Age

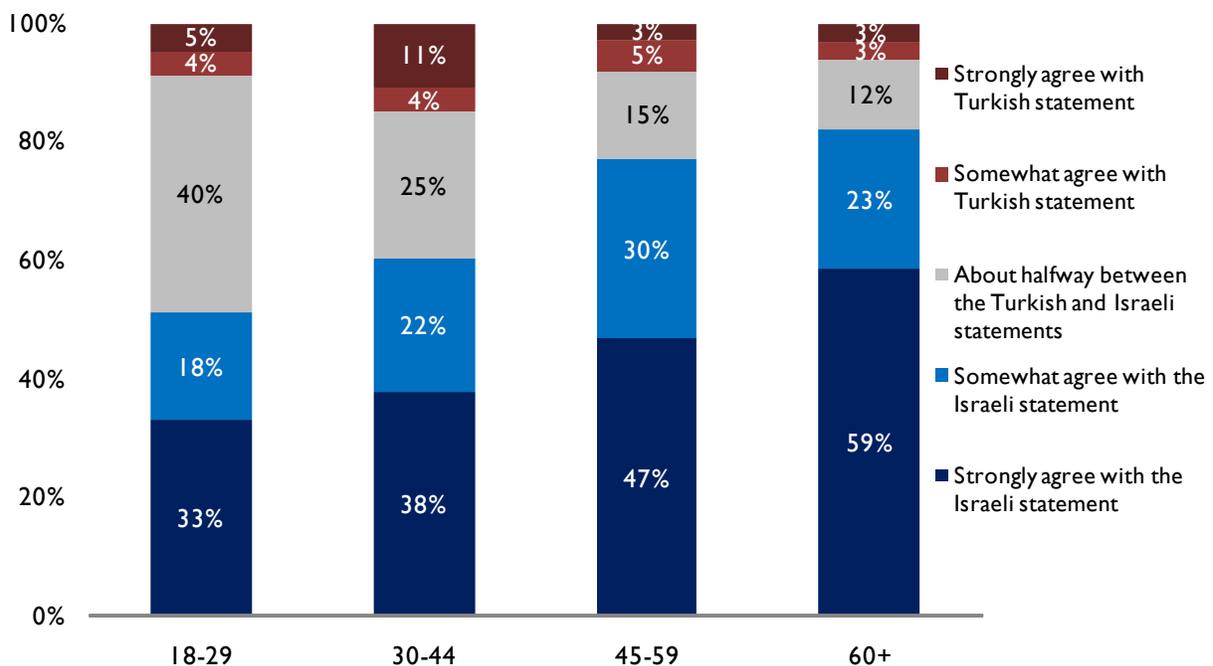
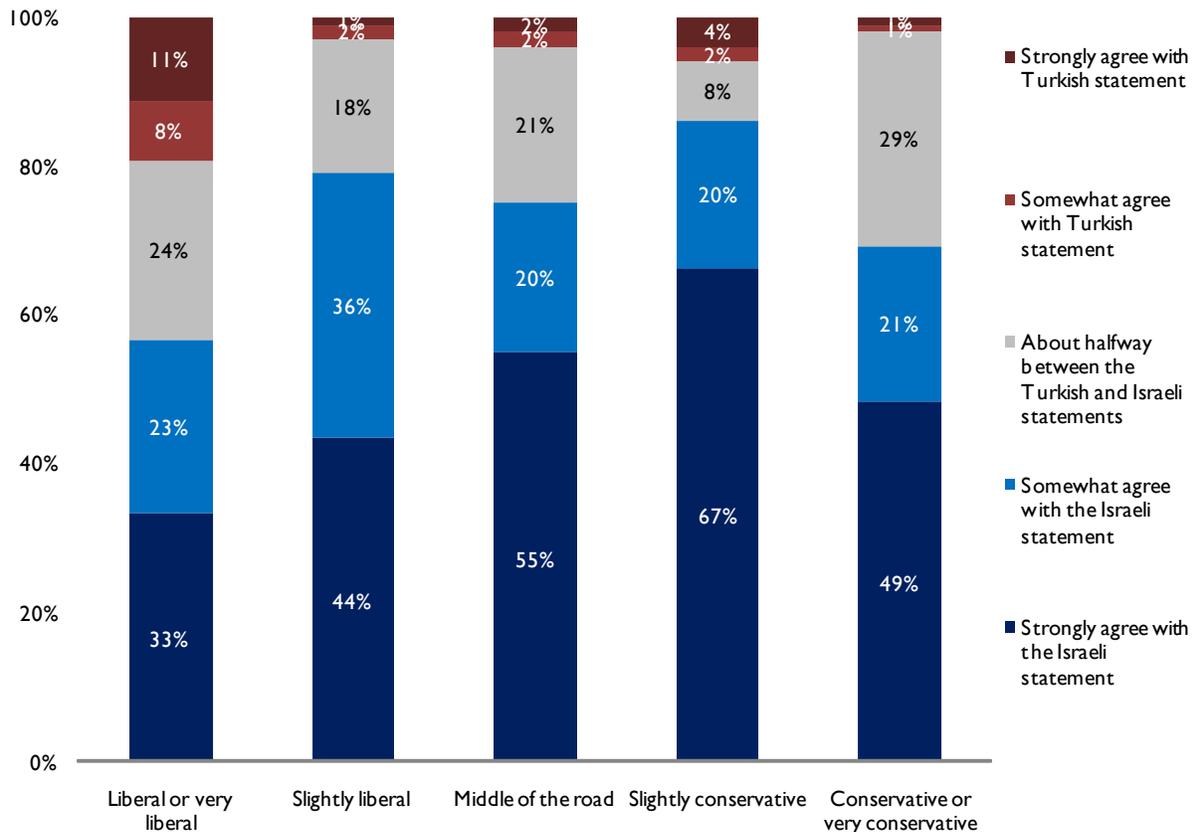


Figure 8. View of Flotilla by Political Ideology



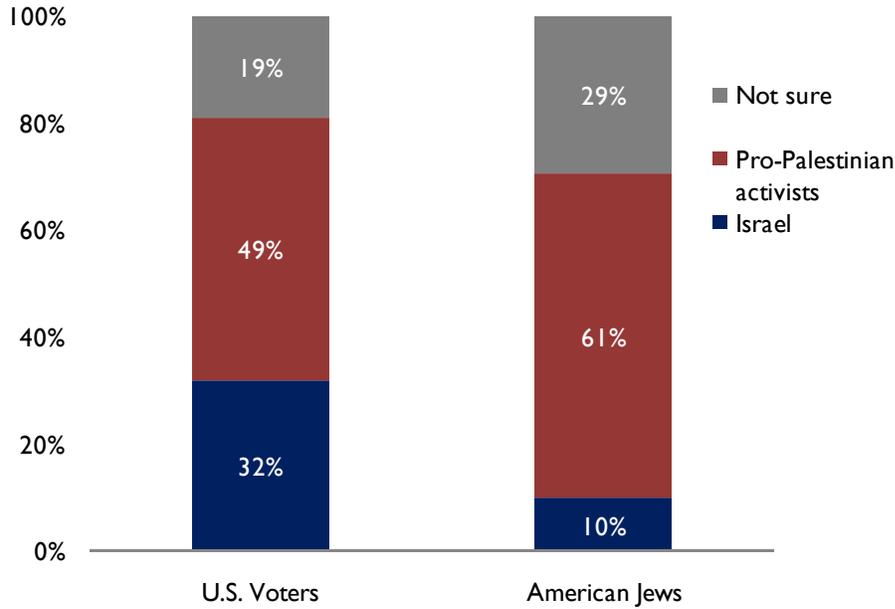
Age was not a factor in the views of American Jews. Younger respondents were no more likely than older respondents to blame Israel for the incident. Political ideology, in contrast, was a major factor, with conservative respondents much more likely to blame the activists (Figure 10).

With all other variables held constant (see Appendix C), blaming the pro-Palestinian activists increases with political conservatism, travel to Israel, and religious observance. Blaming Israel, in contrast, increases with secular educational attainment and parental intermarriage.⁶ Women were more likely to indicate “not sure” in response to the question.⁷

Impact of Flotilla Incident on Attachment to Israel

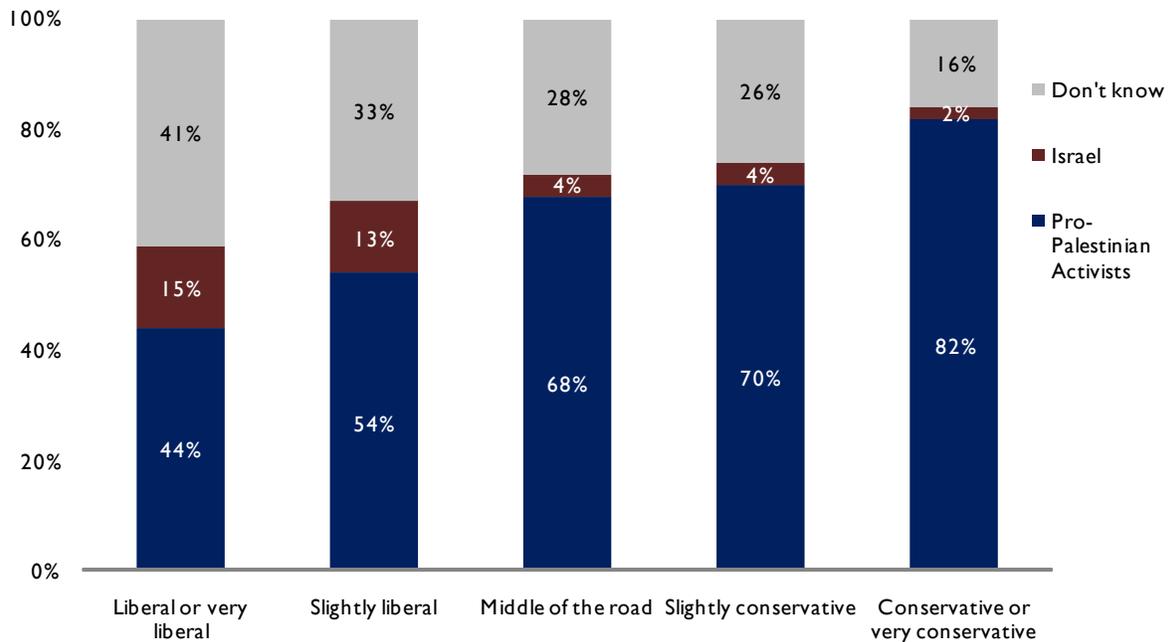
One question we hoped to answer was whether the incident, or its representation in the mass media, had caused American Jews to feel less attached to Israel. To answer the question fully, we needed survey evidence regarding attachment to Israel from the same sample of respondents both before and after the event, which we do not have in the present case. (In the discussion section, below, we introduce such evidence from a parallel survey.) As a proxy measure, we asked respondents whether the incident influenced their general feelings of attachment to Israel.

Figure 9. Blame for Flotilla Incident by Population



Note: “Who is primarily to blame for the deadly outcome of the raid on the aid-carrying ships?” Likely voters only.

Figure 10. Blame for Flotilla Incident by Political Ideology



Seventy percent of respondents indicated that the incident made them feel “neither more nor less attached”; that is, that it had no effect (Figure 11). Twenty percent of respondents indicated that the incident made them feel either much more attached or somewhat more attached, while half as many (10 percent) indicated the opposite, that the incident made them feel much less or somewhat less attached.

Among the minority of respondents who believed that the incident had an impact, their views were shaped, above all else, by their preexisting political orientations: Conservatives were more likely to believe that the incident strengthened—and liberals to believe that it weakened—their attachment to Israel (Figure 12). Age was also a significant factor: Older individuals were more likely to believe that the incident strengthened—and

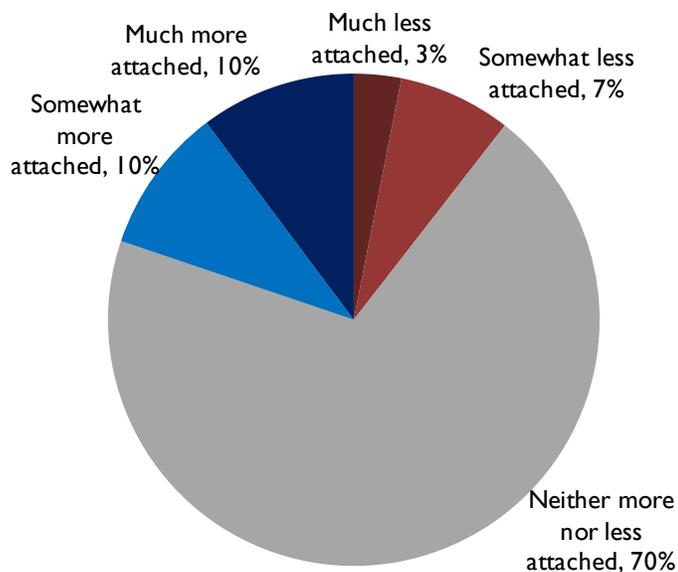
younger individuals that it weakened—their attachment to Israel (Figure 13).

With all other variables held constant (see Appendix C), believing that the incident strengthened one’s attachment to Israel increases with political conservatism, age, travel to Israel, and religious observance. Believing it weakened attachment increases with parental intermarriage and liberalism and decreases with age.

U.S.-Israel Relationship

The survey also asked questions about the level of U.S. support for Israel, and the performance of the U.S. president and the Israeli prime minister in handling the bilateral relationship. This section describes responses to these questions about the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Figure 11. Impact of the Flotilla Incident on Support for Israel



Note: “Overall, how did this incident affect your attachment to Israel?”

Figure 12. Impact of the Flotilla Incident by Political Ideology

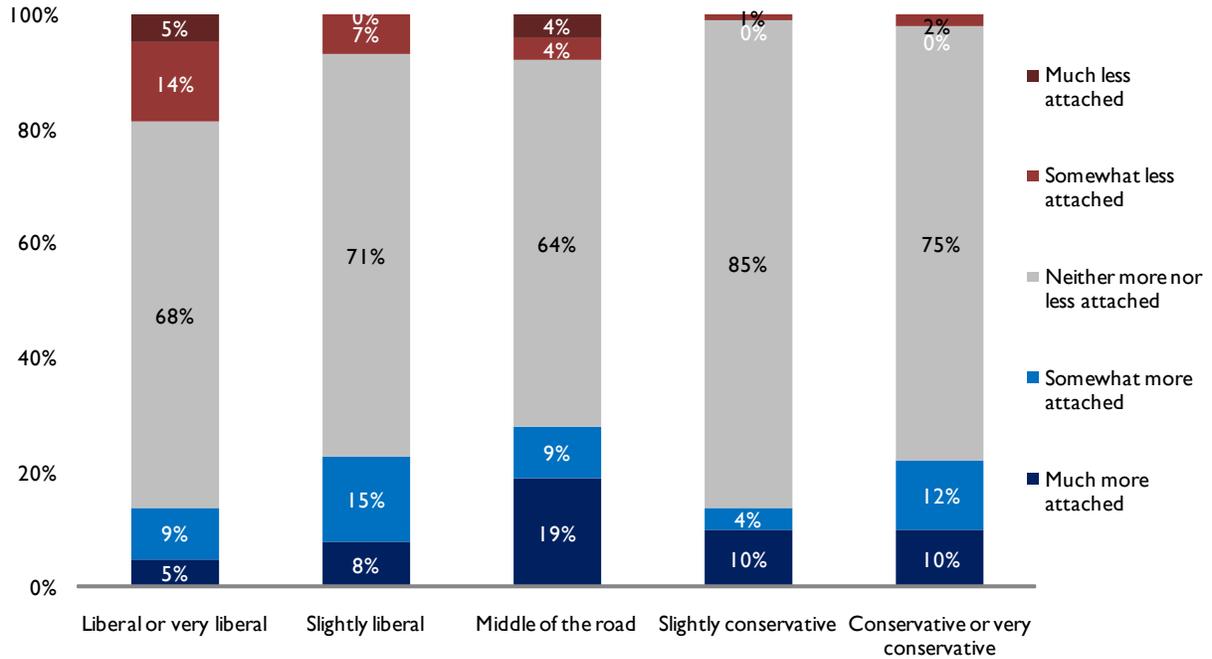
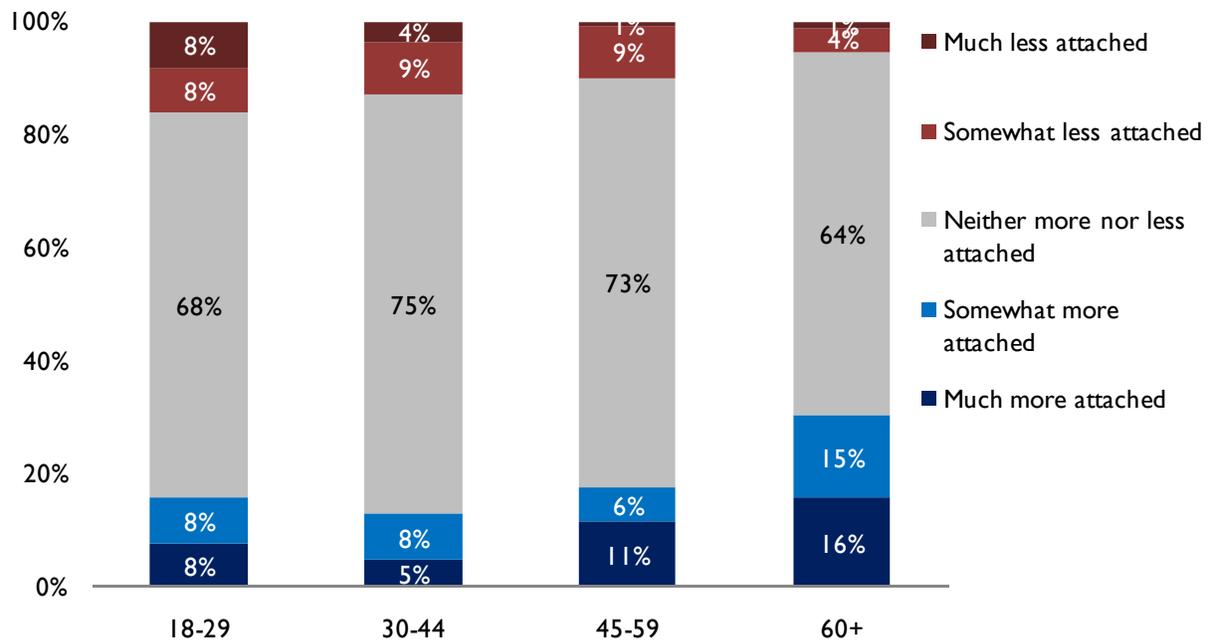


Figure 13. Impact of the Flotilla Incident by Age



U.S. Support for Israel

Respondents to the Rasmussen survey of likely U.S. voters and to our survey of American Jewish opinion were asked whether the United States is “too supportive” or “not supportive enough” of Israel. While only 27 percent of likely voters in the general population thought the United States was too supportive of Israel, the proportion of Jewish likely voters holding that view was much smaller, just 9 percent (Figure 14). In contrast, Jewish likely voters were more likely to view U.S. support as about right.

Age and political ideology were important factors in the views of respondents regarding U.S. support for Israel. Conservatives (Figure 15) and older respondents (Figure 16) were

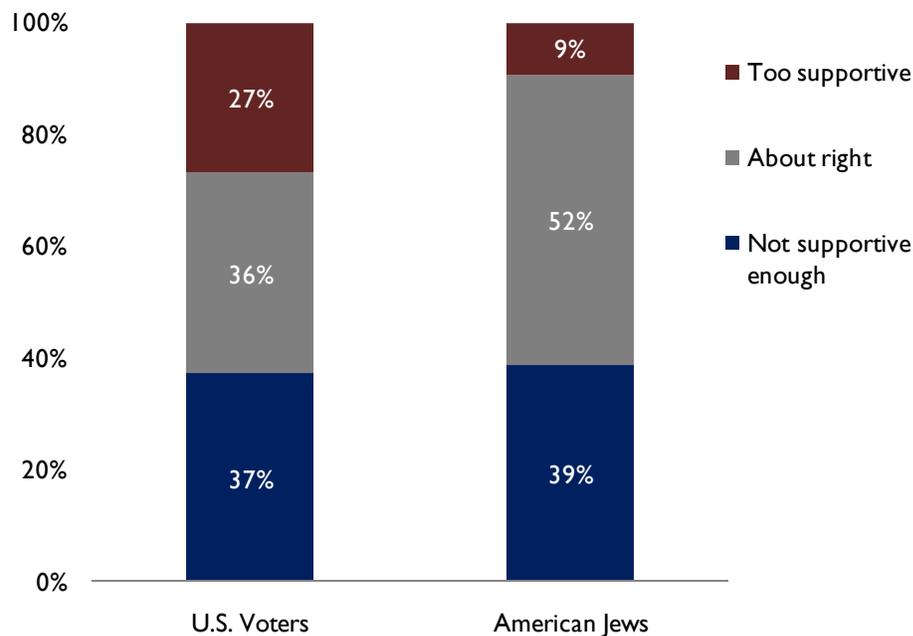
more likely to believe that the United States is not supportive enough.

With all other variables held constant (see Appendix C), belief that the United States is not supportive enough of Israel increases with age, political conservatism, religious observance, religious background, and travel to Israel.

Managing the Relationship

Respondents were asked whether they approve or disapprove of the handling of the U.S.-Israel relationship by the Obama administration and the Netanyahu government. Among those who held an opinion on the question, responses were fairly evenly divided, with roughly equal proportions approving and disapproving of

Figure 14. U.S. Support for Israel by Population



Note: “Generally speaking, is the United States...”

Figure 15. U.S. Support for Israel by Political Ideology

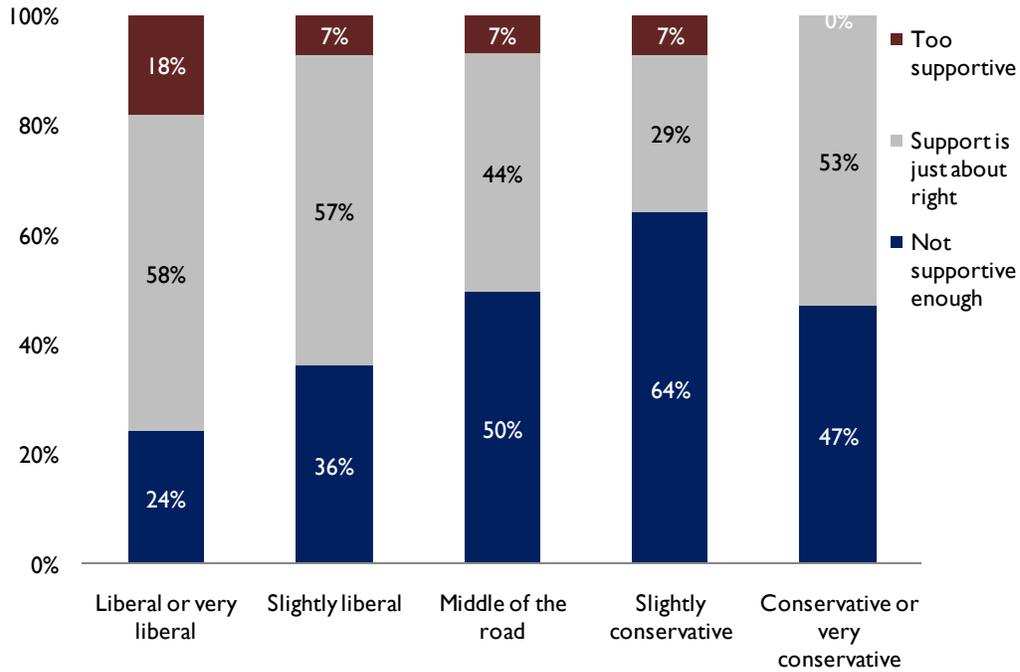
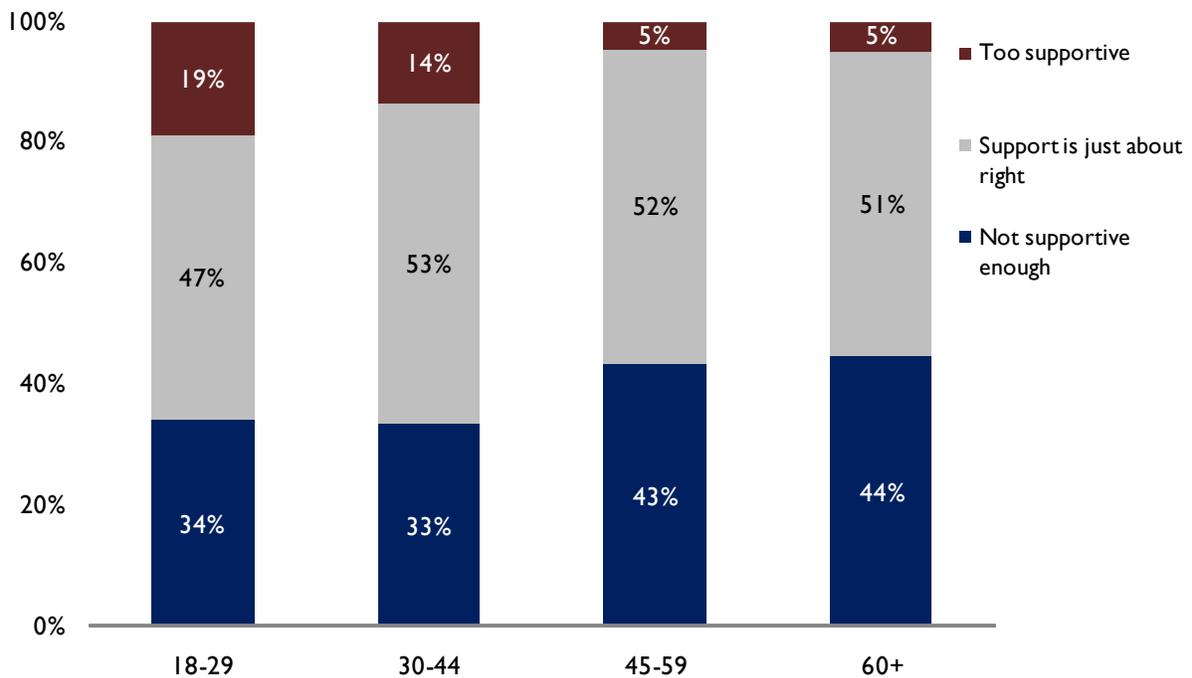


Figure 16. U.S. Support for Israel by Age



the handling of the relationship by each leader (Figure 17). The dominant view among those with an opinion is that neither the Obama administration nor the Netanyahu government is handling the U.S.-Israel relationship well.

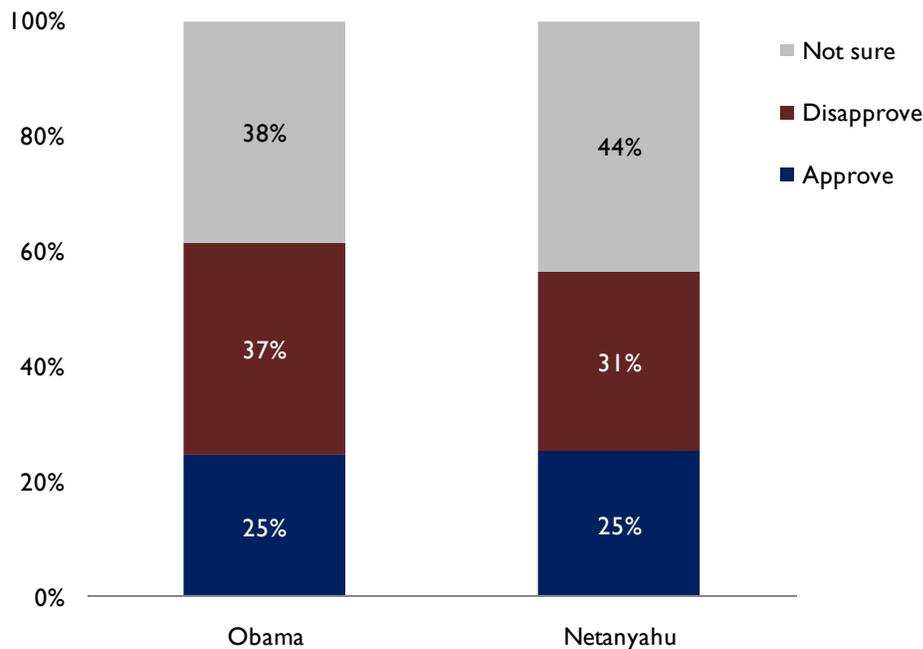
Approval of each leader's handling of the U.S.-Israel relationship was strongly related to self-identified political ideology. Liberals were more likely to approve of President Obama's—and conservatives to approve of Prime Minister Netanyahu's—handling of the relationship (Figure 18, Figure 19). Age had a somewhat unexpected effect, with younger respondents more likely to approve of Netanyahu's—and older respondents more likely to approve of Obama's—handling of the relationship (Figures not shown).⁸

With all other variables held constant (see Appendix C) support for Obama's handling of the relationship increases with educational attainment and age; it decreases with travel to Israel, religious observance, and political conservatism. Support for Netanyahu's handling of the relationship increases with religious observance, religious background, travel to Israel, and being male; it decreases with age, parental intermarriage, and secular education.

Settlements and Jerusalem

The survey also asked about the future of Jerusalem and Jewish settlements in the West Bank—issues that are central to ongoing peace negotiations. The questions were adapted from the annual AJC surveys.

Figure 17. Management of the U.S.-Israel Relationship



Note: "Do you approve or disapprove of the Obama administration's handling of U.S.-Israel relations?" "Do you approve or disapprove of the Netanyahu government's handling of Israel-U.S. relations?"

Figure 18. Obama’s Handling of U.S.-Israel Relations by Political Ideology

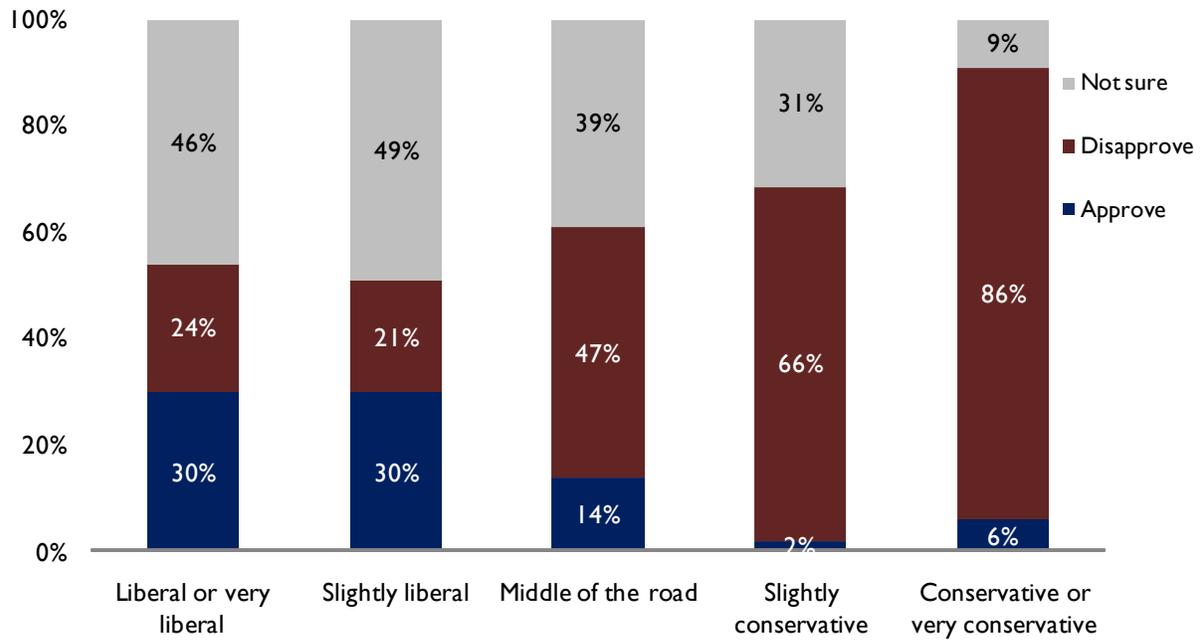
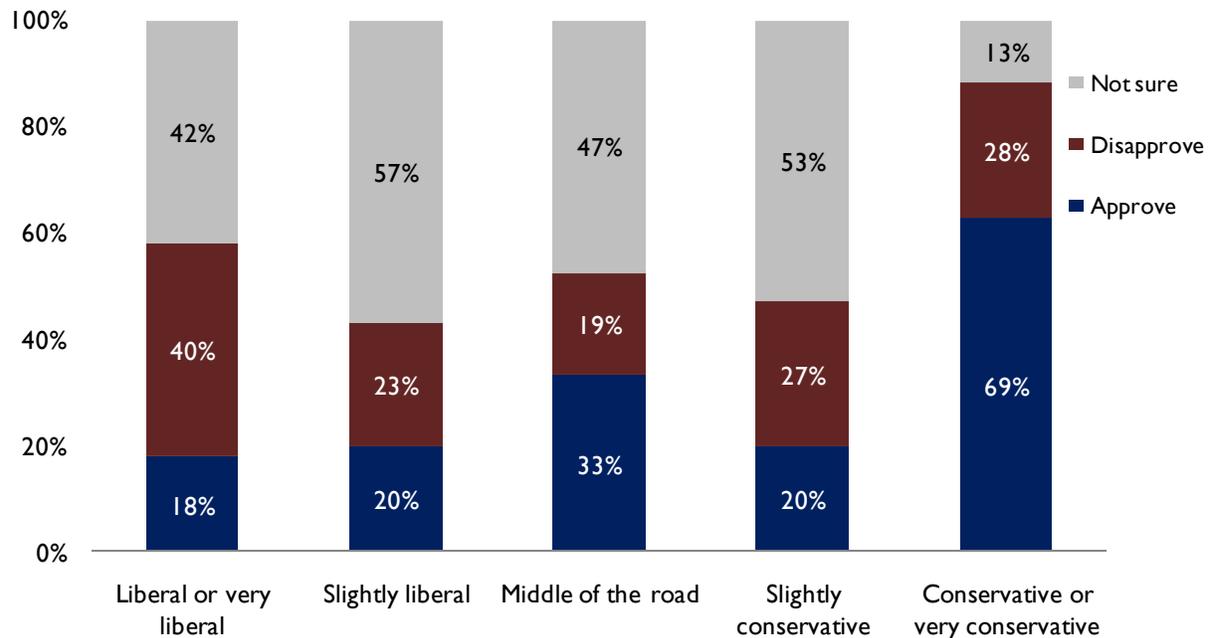


Figure 19. Netanyahu’s Handling of Israel-U.S. Relations by Political Ideology



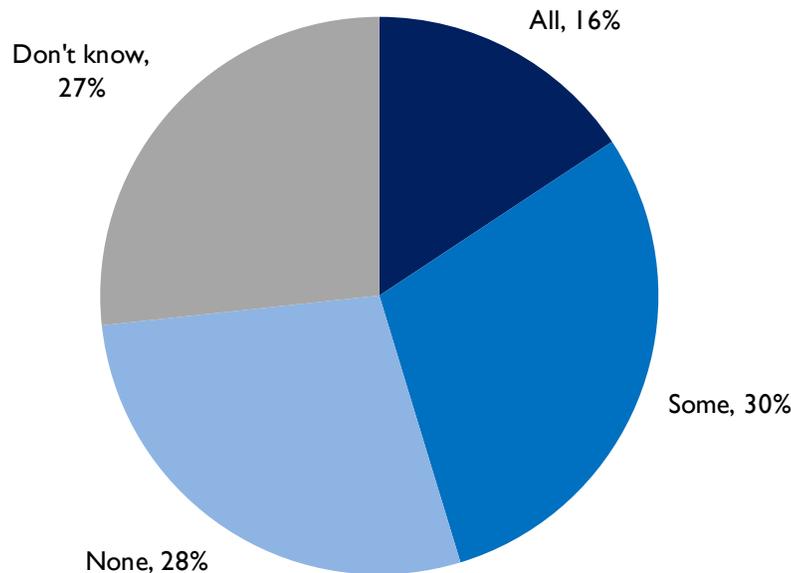
Settlements

Respondents were asked whether, as part of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, Israel should be willing to dismantle Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Respondents who expressed an opinion were fairly evenly divided between those who would approve dismantling “some” settlements and those who would approve dismantling “none.” A smaller but still noteworthy proportion favors dismantling “all” settlements (Figure 20). The distribution of responses is similar to the AJC’s 2010 survey, but with a larger proportion of respondents indicating “don’t know.”⁹

As in previous surveys (Perlmann 2007; Sasson et al. 2010), age was not a factor in responses to the question about West Bank settlements. Political ideology, in contrast, was a major factor: Conservative respondents opposed dismantling settlements; liberal respondents wanted to dismantle some or all of them (Figure 21).

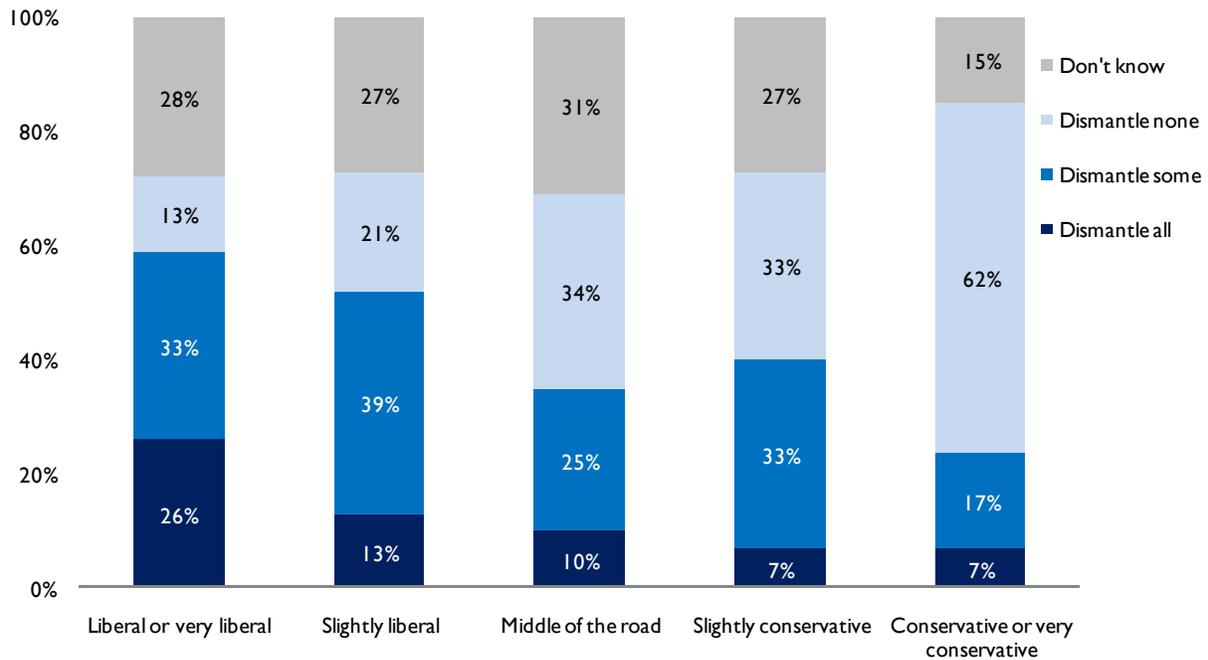
With all other variables held constant, support for dismantling all settlements increases with liberalism, parental intermarriage, and educational attainment; it decreases with religious observance and religious background (see Appendix C).

Figure 20. Dismantling Settlements



Note: “As part of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to dismantle all, some, or none of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank?”

Figure 21. Dismantling Settlements by Political Ideology



Jerusalem

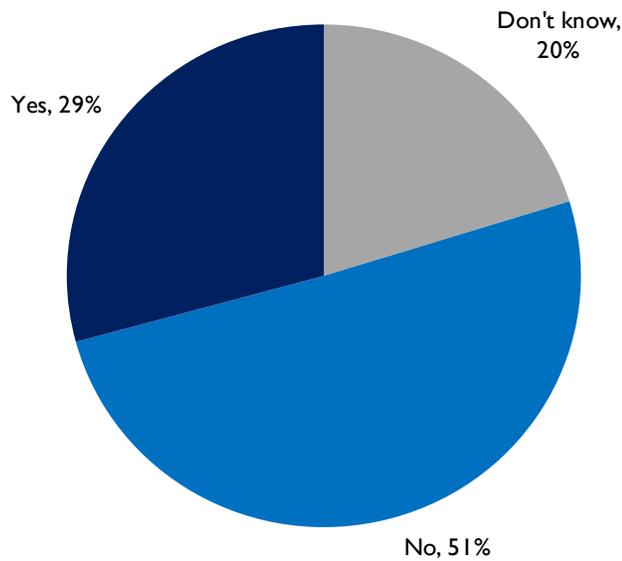
Respondents were also asked for their views on whether, in the context of a final peace settlement, Israel should be willing to compromise on Jerusalem's status as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction. About half of the respondents said "no," that Israel should not be willing to compromise on Jerusalem (Figure 22). This figure is comparable to the 2010 AJC survey but with a larger proportion undecided.¹⁰

As with views on settlements, respondents' views on the future status of Jerusalem were strongly influenced by political ideology:

Conservative respondents were most likely to oppose compromise and liberals to support it (Figure 23). The influence of age was less conspicuous but, perhaps, counterintuitive. Younger respondents were more likely to oppose compromise (Figure 24).

With all other variables held constant (see Appendix C) opposition to compromise on Jerusalem increases with conservatism, travel to Israel, and religious background. Support for compromise increases with age and educational attainment. Gender is also significantly related, with women more likely to answer "don't know."

Figure 22. Compromise on Jerusalem



Note: "In the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to compromise on the status of Jerusalem as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction?"

Figure 23. Compromise on Jerusalem by Political Ideology

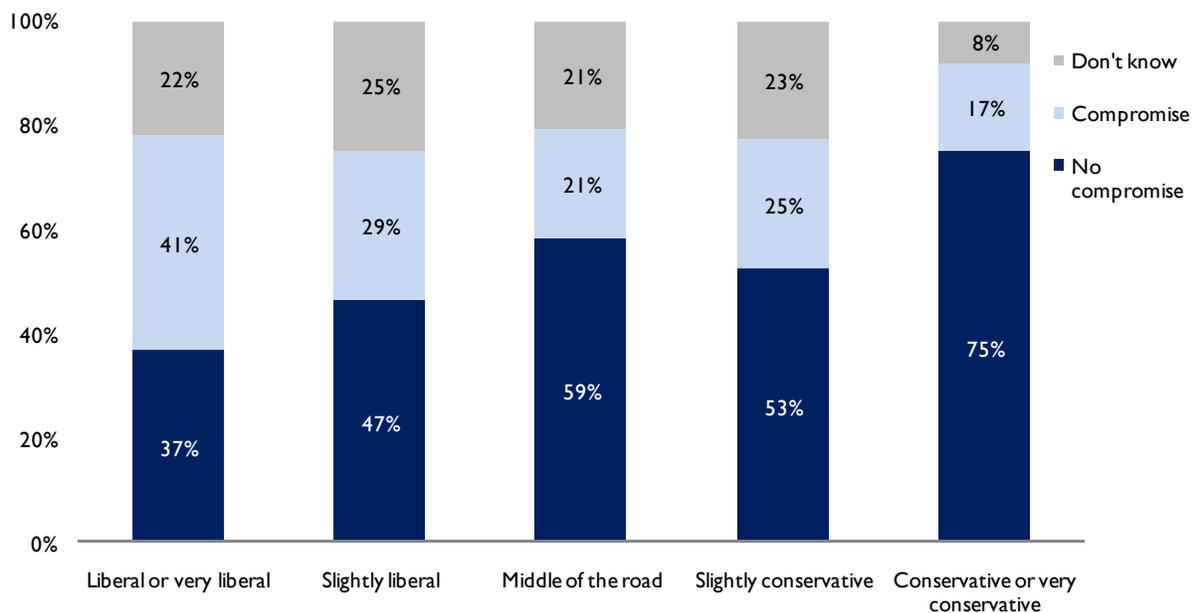
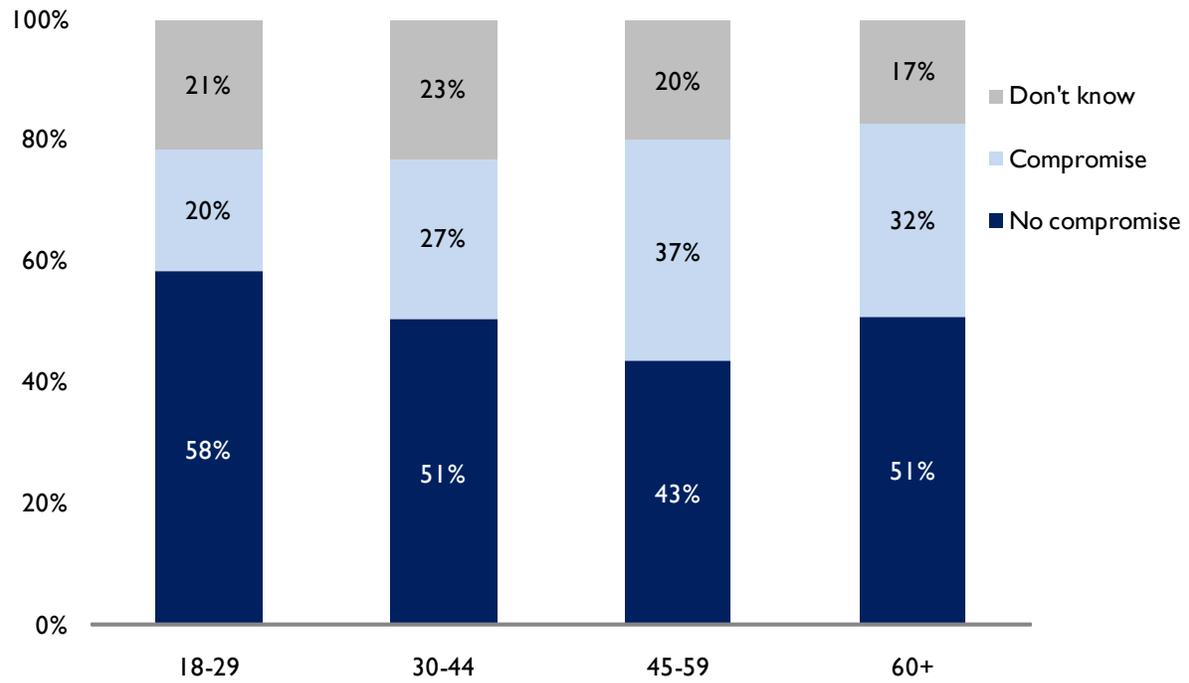


Figure 24. Compromise on Jerusalem by Age



Discussion

The findings of the present study challenge the view that American Jewish attachment to Israel is waning. In the discussion below, the central findings regarding trends in American Jewish attachment to Israel are summarized, and the significance of age and political ideology are explored.

Attachment to Israel

The key finding of the present survey is the stability of American Jewish attitudes towards Israel. Whether it is a direct measure of closeness to Israel or a measure of how important caring about Israel is to their Jewish identities, Israel is important for the majority of American Jews. Even in the wake of incidents that engendered criticism of Israel in the press, such as the Gaza war and flotilla incident, there is no evidence that attachment to Israel declined. This is particularly noteworthy given that the panel used for the present study likely under-represents the Orthodox, a group that is most likely to support Israel.

Our finding of stability in the level of Israel attachment in the present study is consistent with the findings of previous surveys. In particular, comparisons with 24 years of surveys conducted by the AJC indicate substantial consistency over time. At the same time, the present survey indicates that the strength of attachment is not uniform across subgroups of American Jews. Thus, those with substantial prior involvement with Jewish life and Israel, including in particular those who have traveled to Israel and/or those who participate in Jewish religious life, and those who are older express the highest levels of attachment. In contrast, children of intermarried parents and those with higher

levels of secular education are less strongly attached.

Additional evidence in support of the present study's findings regarding the resilience of attachment in the wake of the flotilla incident can be found in a parallel study we conducted of applicants to Taglit-Birthright Israel, a program that brings Diaspora Jewish young adults to Israel on fully subsidized educational tours. The longitudinal study of applicants to the Taglit-Birthright Israel program gathered data from the same individuals in 2009 and 2010 (Saxe et al. 2009; additional report forthcoming).¹¹ Comparing the feelings of the same individuals before and after the flotilla event allows us to measure directly the impact of the past year on sense of connection to Israel. If the flotilla incident had caused estrangement from Israel, it should have been reflected in respondents' answers. It was not, and there was no significant diminution of respondents' sense of connection to Israel.

The longitudinal study also provides corroborating evidence regarding the impact of travel to Israel. Among applicants to Taglit, those who had been to Israel (whether or not they went on a Taglit trip) were significantly more likely to indicate that they felt very connected to Israel. These results with a sample of young adults, including those with low levels of Jewish involvement prior to their Israel experience, suggest that attitudes are malleable and influenced by direct experience with Israel.

Significance of Age

As in other studies (cf. Cohen and Kelman 2007; Sasson et al. 2010), older respondents in the present study were more likely to feel

connected to Israel. In addition, older respondents were somewhat more likely to assert that the flotilla incident strengthened their attachment to Israel. In contrast to previous studies, however, there were no age-related differences with respect to the importance of Israel for Jewish identity. Moreover, in the present study, respondents in the youngest (18-29) age group were more likely than middle-aged respondents to have been to Israel.

The tendency of connection to increase with age is most clearly evident for respondents over age 30. This increase is not be accounted for by other factors that we measured such as trips to Israel or synagogue attendance. One possible explanation (e.g. Ament 2005) is that attachment to Israel declines across generations, as the temporal distance from events associated with the founding of the state increases.

This interpretation is contradicted, however, by the presence of similar age-related differences in surveys conducted since 1986 (Sasson et al. 2008; Sasson et al. 2010) alongside evidence of overall stability of attitudes toward Israel during this time period. Were younger cohorts to have maintained lower levels of attachment as they aged, overall attachment would necessarily have declined. In light of continuous evidence of age-related differences over more than two decades, coupled with the absence of a decline in overall attachment, the evidence favors a *lifecycle* rather than a *generational* explanation. In this view, younger cohorts become more connected to Israel as they age.

Why American Jews may have become more attached to Israel as they grew older is unclear. It is possible that some younger Jews view Israel as a parochial concern that fits awkwardly within their universalistic world view. As they age, perhaps they become more tolerant of such seemingly parochial concerns. Alternatively, as Jews age, they may become more embedded in Jewish community in ways that we have not successfully measured in survey research (and therefore cannot “control” statistically). Future research might profitably examine this question.

Suggestively, although the expected finding of greater attachment of older versus younger cohorts was obtained, we also found that the relationship was not entirely linear: 18- to 29-year-olds seemed to be as attached as older cohorts and more so than 30- to 40-year-olds. The present sample was not large enough to test this relationship statistically, but it buttresses our view (see Sasson et al. 2010) that the recent emphasis on Israel travel and education programs for young adults is creating a new dynamic.

In terms of views on particular issues, younger respondents were more likely to favor neither Israeli nor Turkish explanations of the flotilla incident and to characterize U.S. support for Israel as “about right” rather than too little. Younger respondents, however, were no more likely to blame Israel for the flotilla incident. They were also no more likely to favor dismantling West Bank settlements and *less* likely to endorse a compromise on Jerusalem. One way to think about these findings is to characterize young adults as more skeptical about one-sided claims but not more liberal on specific policy issues.

Significance of Political Ideology

In the context of claims in the public discourse of political alienation from Israel, in particular among American Jewish liberals, it is noteworthy that the present study found no connection between political ideology and measures of attachment to Israel. This finding is consistent with previous research and reflects stability in how Israel is perceived by American Jews. Thus, as in earlier studies (see, in particular, Cohen and Kelman 2007; Perlmann 2007; Sasson et al. 2010), we found that conservatives were no more likely than liberals to feel connected to Israel or regard Israel as central to their Jewish identities. These findings are remarkable given that liberalism is associated with reduced support for Israel in the broader American population.¹² The lack of association between political ideology and attachment to Israel suggests that, among Jews, attachment to Israel remains a nonpolitical issue.

Notwithstanding the lack of relationship between ideology and attachment, the present study showed that respondents' general

political orientations played a large role in their perspectives on virtually all policy issues related to Israel. Conservatives were more likely than liberals to support the official Israeli version of the flotilla incident, blame pro-Palestinian activists for the outcome, and regard U.S. support for Israel as not enough. Although most respondents did not believe the flotilla incident had any effect on their general feelings about Israel, conservatives were more likely to believe the incident strengthened, and liberals to believe it weakened, their attachment to Israel. Political ideology was also a decisive factor in assessments of President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu's handling of the U.S.-Israel relationship and with respect to opinions about the future of the West Bank and Jerusalem. Thus, political ideology is a major factor in shaping opinions about specific Israeli and U.S. policies but only a minor factor—and one tied to respondents' subjective assessment rather than objective measurement—in the determination of feelings of attachment to Israel.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study suggest a need to reconsider the popular narrative of declining American Jewish attachment to Israel. The results cast doubt on the claim of waning attachment over the past two decades and the assertion that liberals or younger Jews are cutting ties to the Jewish state. Younger Jews are somewhat less attached in the current survey, but not consistently so (i.e., not in relation to the importance of Israel in their Jewish identity). Moreover, age differences are not new, and most likely indicate that attachment to Israel increases over the life course rather than declines across the generations. Political ideology is not related to feelings of attachment to Israel. Although American Jews clash over conflicting assessments of Israeli policies and visions of Israel's future, these disagreements have not been cause for widespread alienation in any obvious segment of the American Jewish community.

Although our conclusion is that dire predictions of a schism between American Jews and Israel are unfounded based on the current state of American Jewish opinion, the situation is volatile. Predicting the future is difficult, if not impossible. The evidence about young adults and travel to Israel, however, suggests that the Jewish community has the capacity to influence the future. Although attitudes to Israel among American Jews are influenced by the “facts on the ground”—including Jewish education, family observance, intermarriage, and the broader political environment—efforts to engage American Jewry with Israel yield individuals who feel a close connection regardless of their political sympathies regarding Israel's present government. Perhaps it is a measure of attachment that debate about Israel's policies has transfixed the American Jewish community. If people did not care so much there would be little to argue about.

Notes

¹This differs from the definition of the Jewish population included in the 1990 and 2000-01 National Jewish Population Surveys (NJPS) (Kosmin et al. 1991; Kotler-Berkowitz et al. 2004). NJPS 1990 included all individuals who identified as Jewish by religion (“Jews by Religion” in the study’s terminology) as well as “Jews of No Religion,” people born or raised as Jews who did not identify with a religion or identified with a non-Jewish religion other than Christianity and Islam. NJPS 1990 did not probe whether Jews of No Religion considered themselves to be Jewish. NJPS 2000-01 identified two levels of Jewish identity, Jews and “Jewish-connected.” The former category included people who identified as Jewish by religion, people with a Jewish parent or raised as Jews of no religion who identified as Jews, and people who identified with Judaism and another religion and considered themselves to be Jewish. The latter category included people with a Jewish parent or raised as Jews who identified with both Judaism and some other religion but did not consider themselves to be Jewish, people with a Jewish parent or raised as Jews who had no religion and did not identify as Jews, and people with a Jewish parent or raised as Jews who belonged to a “nonmonotheistic” religion, whether or not they identified as Jews.

²The American Jewish Committee surveys use Synovate’s Consumer Mail Panel, which is recruited via mail (although surveys were collected via both telephone and internet). Accordingly, it is not subject to the same limitations as are the Cohen and Kelman (2007) and J Street (Gerstein 2008, 2009, 2010) surveys (i.e., inability to generalize to a broader population and inapplicability of inferential statistics).

³For example, Cohen and Kelman (2007) report that 40 percent of respondents to their survey had visited Israel.

⁴The bivariate relationship between age in the four categories displayed in Figure 5 and travel to Israel is not statistically significant ($p > .1$). However, both age and its square are statistically significant ($p \leq .001$) in the regression analysis.

⁵The order of the statements was random and no order effects were found. The answers have been recoded to link respondents’ answers to the Turkish or Israeli positions.

⁶Analyses of the effect of various factors on the placing of blame for the incident use the entire sample, not just Jewish likely voters. The entire pool of respondents was slightly less likely to blame Israel (9 percent vs. 10 percent) and pro-Palestinian activists (59 percent vs. 61 percent) than were likely voters.

⁷Women’s greater reluctance to express an opinion is seen in other questions with a “don’t know” response.

⁸Age was not a significant predictor at the bivariate level for approval of either President Obama’s or Prime Minister Netanyahu’s handling of U.S.-Israel relations; however, in both cases it was significant in regression analyses.

⁹The difference may be due to survey format; the AJC survey is conducted by telephone, whereas the current survey is mostly administered on the web.

¹⁰In the AJC 2010 survey, with respect to a compromise on Jerusalem, 61 percent were opposed, 35 percent supported, and four percent were undecided.

¹¹ The response rate to the 2009 survey was 66.7 percent (see Saxe et al. 2009 for further details). Among these respondents, 72.4 percent had responded to the 2010 survey by August 15, the time this analysis was conducted, for a net response rate of approximately 48.3 percent for Wave 2. The data were weighted with 2009 weights adjusted for 2010 panel attrition. The field period for the 2010 survey began on June 10, 2010. As these data were analyzed before the close of the field period (presently estimated for September 2010), final estimates may differ from those presented in this report, although it is likely that any differences will be minimal. The item asked in this survey is identical to the connection to Israel item used in the survey of the KN sample. The random-effects logit regression model used to generate this estimate is shown in Appendix C. The effect of time on attitudes to Israel is measured by the odds ratio for the dummy variable for 2010 surveys, which is not significant ($p > .1$; see Model 1 in Appendix C). Even when an interaction between travel to Israel prior to the first survey is introduced, however, the effect of time is not statistically significant (see Model 2 in Appendix C).

¹² According to a Gallup (2010) survey, 85 percent of Republicans, 60 percent of Independents, and 48 percent of Democrats sympathize more with Israelis than Palestinians in the current situation.

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Center for Modern Jewish Studies