

Recognition Matters!: UN State Status and Attitudes toward Territorial Compromise

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Abstract

Does international recognition of statehood affect support for territorial compromise among groups engaged in struggles for self-determination? We show that, contrary to skepticism about the impact of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), international recognition of statehood by the UNGA shapes mass attitudes toward territorial compromise. The impact of international recognition, however, is two-pronged. International recognition simultaneously increases support for partition as a strategy of conflict resolution and decreases support for compromise on the territorial terms of partition. We also suggest a logic to explain these impacts of international recognition based on the intuition that international recognition should improve the bargaining position of the newly recognized group. We demonstrate that international recognition has an impact on mass attitudes of groups in conflict using a combination of a panel survey and survey experiment assessing the impact of the 2012 UNGA recognition of Palestine. This study is the first to show that international recognition can shape mass attitudes toward conflict.

Keywords

conflict resolution, international institutions, Israeli–Palestinian conflict, international cooperation

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Does international recognition of statehood affect attitudes toward territorial compromise among groups engaged in struggles for self-determination? If the criteria for statehood were once simply the power to assert statehood and back up this assertion with sufficient force, contemporary aspirants for statehood now also need international recognition of their status as a state (Krasner 1999; Coggins 2011). However, such recognition typically involves recognizing a particular set of borders, and these may not correspond to those historically sought by self-determination movements. This raises the question of whether international recognition can influence mass attitudes toward partition and territorial compromise in self-determination conflicts. Despite the international community's pivotal role in recognizing new states and the importance of popular support for the success of partitions, this question has received little scholarly attention.

International recognition can be arrayed along a spectrum. At one end is full membership in the United Nations (UN). This status, conferred by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), signals the fullest degree of international agreement that aspirants for statehood are recognized as legitimate members of the international community. In the middle of the spectrum is international recognition by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).¹ Despite conferring less legitimacy than UNSC recognition, recognition of state status by the UNGA nonetheless provides a significant degree of international legitimacy and a platform for participation in the international community. This is because the UNGA is the "only forum in which a large number of states meet and vote on a regular basis on issues concerning the international community" (Voeten 2000, 185-86). At the other end of the spectrum lies bilateral recognition. While the political, military, and economic benefits provided by bilateral recognition may be considerable, especially when it comes to recognition by great powers, its bilateral character limits the degree of legitimacy such recognition provides.

This study assesses the impact of international recognition of statehood on attitudes toward territorial compromise among the recognized group using the case of the UNGA's 2012 recognition of Palestine as a state. In the fall of 2012, the UNGA recognized Palestine as a "nonmember observer state" on the basis of the "1967 borders," which refer to the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. While sought by the current Palestinian leadership, these borders fall short of the historic claims of the Palestinian national movement and constitute a significant compromise for many Palestinians. The international recognition of Palestine by the UNGA thus offers a rare opportunity to examine the real-world impact of international recognition on domestic attitudes toward territorial compromise in the context of an ongoing territorial conflict. This case also constitutes a relatively hard test since UNGA recognition is a weaker form of international recognition than UNSC recognition. We return to the issue of generalizability in the conclusion.

This is the first study of the impact of international recognition of statehood on mass attitudes toward territorial compromise among groups struggling for self-determination. Our main argument is that international recognition of statehood has

a meaningful impact on mass attitudes toward territorial compromise among such groups. This impact, however, is two-pronged. International recognition simultaneously increases support for partition as a strategy of conflict resolution and decreases support for compromise on the territorial terms of partition. We base this argument on the combined findings of an original panel survey of Palestinians conducted before and after the UNGA recognition of Palestine as a state and a survey experiment conducted alongside the second wave of the panel survey. Our use of a panel survey around this real-world event together with a survey experiment offers a more powerful combination of external and internal validity than either method alone.

We also suggest a logic to explain these impacts of international recognition. The central intuition is that international recognition improves the bargaining position of the newly recognized group. Anticipating this increase in bargaining strength, group members believe that partition will result in a border that is more favorable to their interests than other possible borders that could emerge from partition. Believing that partition will result in a more favorable border, however, group members simultaneously become less willing to compromise on the terms of a partition agreement that specify exactly where the future border will be drawn. Therefore, international recognition increases support for partition as a strategy of conflict resolution but decreases support for compromise on its terms. Future research can establish this logic more directly and test it in other contexts and types of international recognition; for now, we focus on demonstrating that international recognition has more than a symbolic effect.

This study makes two main contributions. First, in contrast to the perception of an irrelevant UNGA, we show that the UNGA powerfully shapes the attitudes of publics involved in struggles for self-determination. A growing body of research persuasively demonstrates that the UNSC can influence domestic public opinion toward the use of force (T. L. Chapman 2007, 2009; T. L. Chapman and Reiter 2004; Thompson 2006; Voeten 2005). Recent scholarship has also shown that Great Power recognition affects whether self-determination movements will achieve statehood (Coggins 2011; Fabry 2010; Telhami 2001). Complementing both strands of scholarship, this study is the first to show that the UNGA, through its ability to symbolically recognize new states, can also influence mass attitudes toward conflict.

Second, this study introduces a new, international, explanation for changes in mass attitudes toward territorial compromise. Existing studies of popular support for territorial compromise in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict identify a number of individual-level correlates of public support including, ethnicity, education, politicized religion, political identification and expectations, and prospective economic evaluations (see, e.g., Nachtwey and Tessler 2002; Shamir and Shikaki 2002). Other studies have focused on the impact of domestic events such as episodes of intergroup violence (see, e.g., Beber, Roessler, and Scacco 2014; Berrebi and Klor 2008; Shikaki 2006). Bridging international politics and comparative public opinion, we argue that international dynamics—namely, international recognition—also play an important but hitherto neglected role in shaping mass attitudes toward territorial compromise.

This finding is consequential because public opinion plays an important role in determining both the acceptance and success of partition. Studies examining the success of partitions and the acceptance of new borders tend to emphasize state- and conflict-level variables, or elite-level interactions, over changes in mass attitudes (see, e.g., T. Chapman and Roeder 2007; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2009; Lustick 1993; O'Leary, Lustick, and Callaghy 2001; Shelef 2010, 2015). However, because leaders of self-determination movements must navigate between the demands of the state they are challenging and their own domestic public (Shamir and Shikaki 2010), public opinion can either embolden leaders to make difficult territorial concessions or constrain them. If leaders accept partition, public buy-in is also critical for its success (T. Chapman and Roeder 2007). In identifying a new variable that affects public support for partition, this study thus also contributes to our understanding of the conditions under which partitions are likely to succeed or fail and explores the effect of an important but underexamined policy tool.

International Recognition and Attitudes toward Territorial Compromise

The Palestinian Authority's (PA) drive for membership in the UN provides a context in which to examine the impact of international recognition. The PA initially submitted its request for full membership in the UN to the UNSC on September 23, 2011. One year later, after this initial request stalled, the PA turned to the UNGA with a request to upgrade its representation in the body from "permanent observer" status to that of a "nonmember observer *state*." While not equivalent to full membership, the upgraded status granted on November 29, 2012 was meaningful to Palestinians because it constituted formal UN recognition of Palestine as state.

There is widespread skepticism about the relevance and efficacy of the UNGA, especially when it comes to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. For example, in 2005, US Ambassador John Bolton argued that the UNGA's resolutions on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict were "purely symbolic" and "meaningless" (Varner 2005). A recent report about the situation in the West Bank also noted that the UNGA's recognition of Palestine as a state "brought no tangible change" (Brown 2013). Even scholarship on the role of the UN in international politics tends to implicitly overlook the impact of the UNGA. The large literature that examines the impact of UN decisions tends to focus on the decisions of the UNSC rather than of the UNGA (see, e.g., T. L. Chapman 2007, 2009; Thompson 2006; Voeten 2005). Those studies that are concerned with the UNGA usually focus on the information about states' preferences conveyed by UNGA votes rather than on the impact of UNGA decisions themselves (see, e.g., Gartzke 1998; Voeten 2000). Indeed, the utility of UNGA votes as indicators of state preferences assumes that states are free to vote their conscience precisely because UNGA votes have no real consequences (see, e.g., Signorino and Ritter 1999).

There are, however, good reasons to believe that UNGA recognition could influence the attitudes of groups seeking self-determination. This is because groups seeking self-determination depend on the international community to achieve their collective aims. Simply put, drives for independence fail if they cannot secure legitimacy from the international community (Coggins 2011). In the contemporary Palestinian context, since the Palestinians can neither force Israel to the negotiating table on their own nor ensure Israeli compliance with any potential agreement without the help of the international community, it would be reasonable for the Palestinian public to pay attention to international decisions that affect their collective goals. Indeed, the Palestinian public closely followed the events at the United Nations. A rally in Ramallah on the eve of the application to the UN drew thousands, and, on the streets, passengers in passing cars honked horns and waved flags while bystanders waved and clapped in return.²

This article evaluates the effect of international recognition by the UNGA on attitudes toward territorial compromise among members of the recognized group. We disaggregate these attitudes into attitudes toward the *principle of partition* and the *terms of partition*. By the principle of partition, we mean the use of territorial division as the chief strategy by which to resolve conflicts over self-determination. The alternative to accepting the principle of partition is maintaining the demand for the entire territory. By the territorial terms of partition, we mean the actual location of the proposed border. Differentiating between the principle of partition and its terms emphasizes the reality that partitions involve both an agreement to divide the disputed territory and an analytically distinct agreement over the specific location of future borders. For example, the acceptance of the partition of Ireland by Great Britain and Irish nationalists in the first half of the twentieth century was only one step in addressing the Irish struggle for self-determination. The resolution of the conflict also required agreement on the terms of partition, including the precise number of counties that would remain in Britain (Anderson and O'Dowd 2007).

Likewise, in the Israeli–Palestinian context, implementing a “two-state solution” requires both acceptance of the principle of partition and agreement on the particular terms of partition. The two-state solution is thus better understood as a repertoire of possible solutions than as a clearly defined policy. All versions of the two-state solution would divide the region into Palestinian and Israeli states, but their terms differ with regard to how closely the envisioned border between them would correspond to the “1967 borders.”

We argue that international recognition affects support for both the principle and the terms of partition through a bargaining strength mechanism. International recognition could improve the actual and perceived bargaining position of the recognized group through at least three non-mutually exclusive pathways. First, international recognition may shape perceptions of bargaining strength among the newly recognized group by conveying new information about the level of international political support for their cause and, in turn, the willingness of the international community to pressure or sanction the challenged state. International recognition by the UNGA is

informative despite its weakness relative to UNSC recognition because, as noted earlier, the UNGA is the main forum in which the international community debates issues of global concern (Voeten 2000). A victory in the UNGA could thus signal to group members that the state they are challenging would face increasing international political pressure to make concessions and would bear significant diplomatic, economic, or other costs if it failed to do so.

Second, international recognition could increase bargaining strength by providing the group with new outside options to negotiation (Powell 1996). For example, recognition as a state by the UNGA allows the recognized group to join the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other international organizations and to use these organizations to advance their territorial claims. Such “international options” to negotiation improve the recognized group’s bargaining position by increasing the costs of failing to reach a deal for the challenged state and incentivizing it to offer more concessions. At the same time, they are less costly to the newly recognized group than the preexisting outside option of using violence. Members of the recognized group are likely to anticipate the increase in bargaining strength resulting from these outside options and to expect an improvement in their future bargaining position.

Finally, international recognition could improve the relative position of the recognized group by giving them something for nothing. International recognition is a paramount issue in struggles for self-determination. Challenged states may withhold recognition or, even if they are willing to recognize a secessionist group as a legitimate state, demand some concessions in return. By granting state status prior to the conclusion of negotiations, international recognition gives the recognized group something that they would otherwise only get once a deal is concluded and reduces the leverage of the challenged state (Powell 2002). Observing this, group members should expect their bargaining position to improve.

These implications of international recognition for a group’s bargaining strength suggest that international recognition could simultaneously increase support for the principle of partition and decrease support for compromise on the territorial terms of partition. In a stronger bargaining position but still significantly weaker than the state it challenges, the group is likely to expect a more favorable border from among the range of possible border arrangements under partition and thus to become *more* willing to support partition as a strategy of conflict resolution. At the same time, because the recognized group believes that it is in a stronger bargaining position, it is likely to seek more concessions from the state it is challenging and be less willing to compromise on the specific terms of an agreement specifying where to draw the border.

In principle, an increase in a group’s bargaining strength could cause it to make more maximalist demands in general. However, because self-determination movements are usually much weaker than the states they challenge, any increase in bargaining strength due to international recognition is unlikely to trump the challenged state’s advantages to such an extent that the recognized group rejects partition

altogether.³ As a result, when international recognition improves a group's bargaining position against a still much stronger state, international recognition should increase support for the principle of partition but *decrease* support for making concessions on the territorial terms of partition. This logic of the impact of international recognition gives rise to our main hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: International recognition will increase support for the principle of partition.

Hypothesis 2: International recognition will decrease support for making concessions on the territorial terms of partition.

Study Design

This section presents an overview of the panel survey and survey experiment we use to assess the impact of the UNGA recognition of Palestine.⁴ This multimethod approach allows us to leverage the complementary strengths of panel surveys and survey experiments. Panel surveys possess a high degree of external validity, but the potential presence of unaccounted-for intervening events limits the quality of causal inference they enable. On the other hand, while survey experiments can increase our confidence in the causal inference that is drawn, they are sometimes criticized for lacking external validity (Barabas and Jerit 2010). The use of both in concert generates greater confidence in our ability to identify the true causal impact of international recognition on mass attitudes.

The panel survey took place in twenty-two localities across the West Bank.⁵ To ensure a representative sample, randomization was employed at every level of sample selection from the governorate to the individual respondent. Survey sampling was conducted using a multistage stratified random sampling procedure. At each stage, the probability with which units were selected and the number of survey questionnaires assigned to a stratum were proportional to their population size.⁶ This resulted in a survey sample that closely approximates the Palestinian population.⁷ Where the panel survey proportions meaningfully differ from the population, as with the proportion of refugees, we conduct the analysis both with and without post-stratification weights adjusting the survey proportions to the population proportions.

The first wave of the panel survey took place in September 2011, just before the PA submitted its application to the UNSC. Two hundred individuals were surveyed, with a response rate of 87 percent. The second wave of the panel survey took place immediately after the UNGA recognized Palestine as a nonmember observer state in November 2012. Despite the relatively long interval between the two waves of the panel survey, we were able to reinterview a high proportion of the original respondents: 67 percent of the original respondents ($n = 134$) and nearly 75 percent of the original households ($n = 147$). Where we were unable to reinterview the same person or household, we randomly selected a new respondent from the same enumeration area.

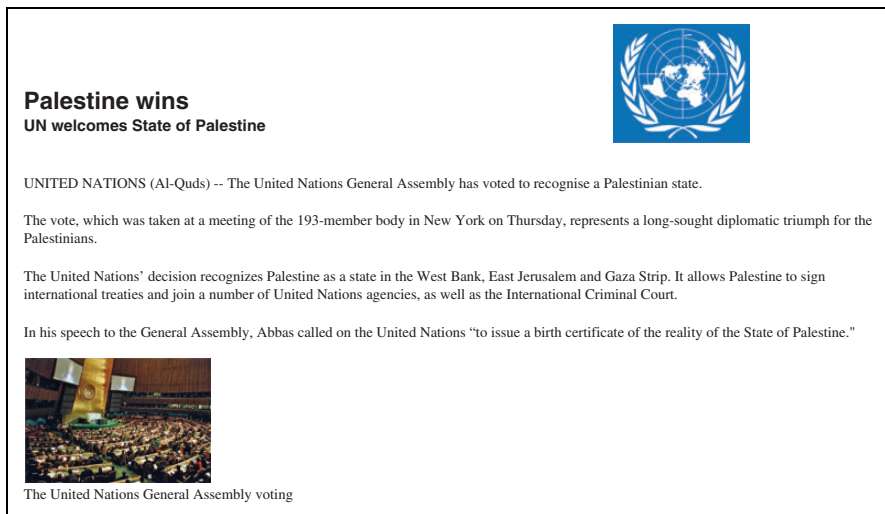


Figure 1. Experimental treatment (English translation).

In all analyses of the panel survey data, we draw on only those individuals interviewed in *both* waves of the survey (i.e., original respondents). This results in a final sample of 268 observations, or two observations on 134 individuals. This ensures that any observed shift in mass attitudes is due to changing attitudes rather than a changing survey sample.⁸ However, this smaller sample also means that our analysis has less statistical power to detect the effects of interest.

The survey experiment was administered to a new sample of 160 individuals, as well as all non-original respondents interviewed as part of the panel survey, for a total sample size of 226 respondents.⁹ The experimental treatment consisted of a news article about the UNGA recognition of Palestine that was based on real news articles appearing in the Palestinian and Arabic-language press after the decision (see Figure 1). Like these news articles, the survey experiment frames UNGA recognition as a victory in the struggle for Palestinian statehood. In theory, UNGA recognition could also have been framed as a negative outcome in light of the failed application to the UNSC a year earlier. However, the positive framing employed in the treatment mirrors the overwhelmingly positive framing used by the local press and by Palestinian political actors from across the political spectrum, including those (like Hamas) who stood to lose politically from its success (see, e.g., Nakhoul 2012; Ma'an News Agency 2012). This framing is also in line with the perceptions of the Palestinian public, approximately 70 percent of which viewed the UNGA application as serving the Palestinian national cause (An-Najah 2012).

This treatment was designed to prime the UNGA decision and thus increase its salience, while avoiding any direct discussion of the impact of the decision on the

Palestinian bargaining position. This allows us to evaluate whether respondents were making this connection on their own. Following standard procedure in survey experiments, respondents assigned to the control group received a neutral news article about sports programs for Palestinian youth, which we carefully chose for its nonpolitical content (see Figure S1 in the Online Appendix). Respondents were assigned to the treatment and control groups using blocked randomization, and a comparison of the two groups demonstrates that they are indeed similar on most key characteristics.¹⁰ A manipulation check shows that respondents randomly assigned to the treatment group evaluated Palestine's status in the world more positively than respondents randomly assigned to the control group, verifying that the treatment worked as intended. See the Online Appendix for a detailed description of the randomization procedure and the manipulation check.

Does International Recognition Shape Attitudes toward Territorial Compromise?

Evidence from the panel survey shows a real-world shift toward greater support for the principle of partition in the wake of international recognition by the UNGA. We measure support for the *principle of partition* with a five-level ordinal variable indicating the extent of support for the two-state solution. Because the basic premise of any version of the two-state solution is the partition of the region into two states, support for the two-state solution is tantamount to support for the principle of partition.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of support for the principle of partition among the same sample of respondents before and after international recognition. As seen in the figure, support for the principle of partition was widespread even before international recognition. However, whereas most respondents weakly supported partition before the UNGA decision, they strongly supported partition afterward.¹¹ This suggests that there was an increase in Palestinians' support for the principle of partition in the wake of international recognition.

To test whether such a shift occurred, we estimate a series of ordered logit models of the effect of international recognition on support for the principle of partition.¹² We measure the real-world impact of international recognition using a binary variable (*POST*) that takes on a value of "1" for all observations taken (i.e., surveys administered) after international recognition and "0" before it. We account for changes in *regional conditions* between the two waves of the panel survey, beginning with the impact of the Muslim Brotherhood's victory in neighboring Egypt following the Arab Spring. The Brotherhood was widely perceived as more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause than the previous Mubarak administration, as well as more friendly to Hamas. As such, the Brotherhood's victory could also have improved the Palestinian bargaining position and thereby increased support for the principle of partition. Alternatively, because of its support for Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood's victory could have delegitimized partition or increased support for a greater role for religion in politics and the use of religious criteria in determining

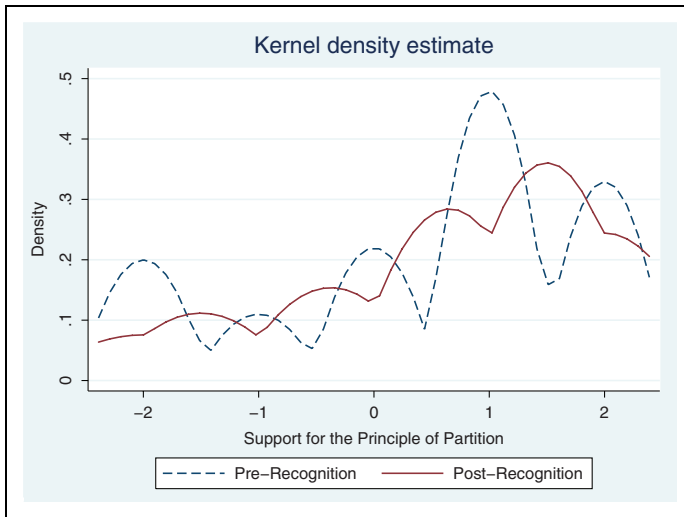


Figure 2. Support for the principle of partition before and after United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) recognition.

the borders of a Palestinian state. We thus control for Palestinians' perceptions of the new government's political position and attitudes toward the *proper role of religion in politics*, respectively.¹³

We also control for domestic economic and political conditions that may have changed between the two waves of the panel survey. To control for *changing economic conditions*, we include a variable for household income, measured on a ten-point scale ranging from 1–500 New Israeli Shekels (NIS) to 4,501–5,000 NIS. To control for *changing political conditions*, we include a measure of support for the ruling Fatah party, measured as a binary variable. Because the Fatah party has prominently supported partition under the two-state solution, any increase in its popularity could also increase support for the principle of partition and therefore confound the effect of international recognition.¹⁴

Finally, we account for serial correlation stemming from the panel structure of the data by including individual-level random effects.¹⁵ We use post-stratification weights to adjust for the overrepresentation of refugees in the survey sample and to ensure that it matches the general population.¹⁶ Table 1 presents the results in the form of odds ratios.

Table 1 shows that international recognition has a powerful effect on support for the principle of partition. Column (1) presents the effect of international recognition on support for the principle of partition controlling for the impact of changing regional conditions.¹⁷ It shows that international recognition increases the odds of strongly supporting the principle of partition by as much as 75 percent or approximately 0.4 points on the five-point scale ($p = .02$). This effect is

Table 1. The Effect of International Recognition on Support for the Principle of Partition (Panel Survey).

	Model with regional controls	Model with all controls
POST	1.75** (0.43) [0.02]	1.58* (0.38) [0.06]
Egyptian position	0.89 (0.16) [0.50]	0.85 (0.15) [0.33]
Politicized religion	0.77* (0.12) [0.09]	0.86 (0.13) [0.31]
Fatah		2.27** (0.63) [0.00]
Income		1.01 (0.07) [0.87]
Observations	261	261

Note: Post-stratification weights adjust for the overrepresentation of refugees in survey sample. Exponentiated coefficients. Standard errors within parentheses; *p* values within brackets. **p* < .10. ***p* < .05. ****p* < .01.

substantially larger than the effect of politicized religion, which previous studies have identified as an important determinant of support for partition in the Israeli–Palestinian context (Nachtwey and Tessler 2002). Column (2) adds additional controls for changing domestic conditions. The effect of international recognition remains substantively large and statistically significant (*p* = .06). These results suggest that international recognition increases support for the principle of partition and that other major contemporaneous events do not easily account for this change.

As an additional robustness check, we also estimate an ordinary least squares regression model with individual-level fixed effects and robust standard errors. The inclusion of individual-level fixed effects rules out the possibility that the impact of international recognition is driven by unobserved time-invariant or slow-changing differences among individuals.¹⁸ The results, reported in Table S8 in the Online Appendix, are consistent with those of the ordered logit model with random effects. Overall, these findings suggest that the *same* individual was more likely to support partition following international recognition than before it.

International Recognition and the Principle of Partition: Evidence from the Survey Experiment

We also estimate the causal impact of international recognition on mass attitudes toward territorial compromise using a survey experiment designed to tightly

Table 2. The Effect of International Recognition on Support for the Principle of Partition (Survey Experiment).

	Support for the principle of partition	
	(1)	(2)
Treatment	1.65** (0.42) [0.05]	1.59* (0.40) [0.07]
Fatah	4.53*** (1.23) [0.00]	4.38*** (1.20) [0.00]
Blocking covariates	Yes	No
Strata dummies	No	Yes
Observations	223	223

Note: Odds ratios with standard errors within parentheses. *p* values within brackets. All models include respondent type dummies.

p* < .10. *p* < .05. ****p* < .01.

identify this effect. To evaluate the impact of international recognition, we again estimate an ordered logit model of the effect of international recognition on support for the principle of partition. As in the analysis of the panel survey data, support for the *principle of partition* is measured as a five-level ordinal variable indicating the extent of support for the two-state solution. Here, though, the main independent variable is a binary indicator of assignment to treatment (*Treatment*). In addition, we include a series of control variables addressing three potential challenges to inference. First, following Bruhn and McKenzie (2009), we control for the method of randomization by controlling for the *blocking covariates* (gender, refugee status, and educational attainment) or by including *strata dummies* based on these covariates.¹⁹ Second, we control for *party identification*, as this is the only theoretically relevant variable on which our treatment and control groups are imbalanced.²⁰ Finally, we control for other potential differences between respondents by including a series of binary variables indicating whether individuals belong to the 160 new respondents selected for the survey experiment or to the subset of panel survey respondents who received the survey experiment (i.e., “respondent type dummies”). We include these covariates in all analyses of the experimental data.²¹

The results of the experiment corroborate the real-world findings of the panel study. Table 2 presents the average treatment effect of international recognition on support for the principle of partition. International recognition increases the odds of strongly supporting the principle of partition by 65 percent. This effect is equivalent to a ten percentage point increase in the probability of strongly supporting the principle of partition (*p* = .047). These results are robust to an alternative specification of the model in column (2), which uses strata dummies to estimate the *within-group* effect of

Table 3. The Effect of International Recognition on Support for the Territorial Terms of Partition (Survey Experiment).

	Support for the territorial terms of partition	
	(1)	(2)
Treatment	0.60* (0.17) [0.07]	0.61* (0.18) [0.09]
Fatah	0.78 (0.23) [0.40]	0.77 (0.23) [0.39]
Blocking covariates	Yes	No
Strata dummies	No	Yes
Observations	219	219

Note: Odds ratios with standard errors within parentheses. *p* values within brackets. All models include respondent type dummies.

p* < .10. *p* < .05. ****p* < .01.

the treatment for respondents with the same gender, refugee status, and educational attainment.²² Complementing the findings of the panel survey, these results show that international recognition increases support for partition as a strategy of conflict resolution.

International Recognition and the Territorial Terms of Partition

We now turn to an examination of the impact of international recognition on support for making concessions on the *territorial terms of partition*. Specifically, we evaluate the effect of international recognition on support for a contested but likely feature of any successful negotiated settlement between Israel and the Palestinians: continued Israeli sovereignty over the largest Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, with an equal amount of land being transferred to the Palestinian state. These “land swaps” are widely expected to take place because of the perceived difficulty of removing the largest settlements close to the 1967 border.

Table 3 shows estimates from an ordered logit model of the effect of international recognition on support for this additional territorial concession. Support for land swaps is measured as a three-level ordinal variable, with “0” denoting strong opposition, “1” denoting weak opposition, and “2” denoting neutrality or support.²³ As mentioned earlier, the main independent variable is a binary indicator of assignment to treatment, and we control for party affiliation, respondent type, and the method of randomization.

This analysis provides support for our second hypothesis, which expects that international recognition will decrease support for concessions on the territorial

terms of partition. International recognition lowers the odds of supporting land swaps by as much as 40 percent ($p = .07$). Thus, while international recognition increases support for the principle of partition, it has a negative effect on support for concessions on the territorial terms of partition. In contrast, Fatah party membership does not have any statistically significant effect on support for the territorial terms of partition. This is likely because, in contrast to the principle of partition, Fatah has not articulated a strong public position on the issue of land swaps. Indeed, omitting the Fatah variable from the model yields consistent results, as does estimating the model with no control variables.²⁴

Overall, these results suggest that international recognition matters. While international recognition increases support for the principle of partition, it makes individuals less willing to make additional territorial concessions on the terms of partition. These findings are consistent with the bargaining strength mechanism we posit. An increase in the recognized group's bargaining strength means that partition will result in a border that is more favorable to their interests than other possible border arrangements emerging from partition. Knowing this, group members are more likely to support the principle of partition but less willing to make any additional concessions beyond the basic compromise of partition. We now turn to exploring the plausibility of this mechanism.

International Recognition as Increasing Bargaining Strength

We have argued that international recognition can affect mass attitudes toward territorial compromise by improving the actual and perceived bargaining position of the recognized group. In this section, we provide some initial evidence that, consistent with this mechanism, UNGA recognition improved the Palestinians' bargaining strength and changed perceptions accordingly.

As we noted earlier, international recognition may shape perceptions of bargaining strength among the recognized group by conveying new information about the level of international political support for their cause. Recognition as a state by the UNGA clearly showed a high degree of international political support for Palestinian statehood, with 138 states voting in favor, 41 opposing, and only 9 abstaining. International recognition by the UNGA also translated into greater political support for Palestinian statehood among European states. For example, Sweden's Foreign Minister justified Sweden's (subsequent) bilateral recognition of Palestine as a state, in part, on the basis of the UNGA decision (Wollström 2014; Bring, Mahmoudi, and Wrange 2014).

International recognition also strengthened the Palestinians' bargaining position by providing them with new outside options to negotiation. After the UNGA decision, Israel sought to prevent Palestinians from exercising these outside options and, in particular, from joining the ICC. To do so, Israel agreed to release 104 Palestinian prisoners as part of negotiations, including prisoners with "blood on their hands" (Rudoren 2014; Khoury 2014). When Israel missed the deadline to release the last

round of prisoners, however, the Palestinians sought to induce Israel to negotiate in good faith by applying to fifteen international organizations and treaties. According to American officials, exercising this outside option was intended to exert leverage on Israel rather than scuttle the negotiations. In particular, the Palestinians refrained from joining the ICC at that time, which would have ended negotiations, only joining those international institutions less threatening to Israel (Rudoren, Gordon, and Landler 2014).

The Palestinian leadership clearly anticipated that international recognition would improve their bargaining strength. Nabil Sha'ath, a senior Palestinian leader, candidly described the appeal to the United Nations as a "card in [Palestinian president Abu Mazen's] pocket" and argued that "Some say we are doing all this to improve our bargaining cards in negotiations. So what's wrong with that?" (Hass 2011, see also Associated Press 2011).

The increasingly successful drive by the Palestinians to gain bilateral recognition from European states shows that these states also view recognition as a means with which to increase Palestinian bargaining strength. For example, Sweden explicitly justified its 2014 recognition of Palestine as a state in terms of giving the Palestinians something—recognition—that would make "the parties less unequal" (Sweden, Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2014). Similarly, proponents of the parliamentary motion that Ireland recognize Palestine argued that recognition "is not an Israeli bargaining chip . . . [Recognition of Palestine as a state] will help increase pressure on Israel to pursue a genuine peace process. . . ." (Haaretz 2014). Like UNGA recognition, these bilateral recognitions of state status give the Palestinians "something for nothing." By giving Palestinians international recognition before they acquire Israeli recognition—and before they have to make the difficult concessions required to gain such recognition—international recognition provides Palestinians with an extra bargaining chip they can use to extract other Israeli concessions.

We would expect the perceptions of the Palestinian public to reflect the actual increase in bargaining strength suggested by these developments. We examine this possibility by using the survey experiment to test two observable implications of the argument that international recognition affects popular perceptions of bargaining strength. We first examine the effect of international recognition on the perceived level of international political support for the recognized group.²⁵ As we described earlier, an increase in the perceived level of international political support for a group's cause should cause group members to believe that the group is in a stronger bargaining position than before and, thereby, affect their attitudes toward territorial compromise.

Table 4 presents estimates from an ordered logit model of the effect of international recognition on individual perceptions of international political support. We measure the dependent variable, international political support, in two ways: (a) the perceived *proximity between the Palestinian position and the position of the international community* and (b) *trust in the United Nations*.²⁶ As mentioned earlier, we measure the effect of international recognition using a binary indicator of

Table 4. The Effect of International Recognition on Perceived International Support.

	Perceived proximity		Trust in the United Nations	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	1.83** (0.46) [0.02]	1.80** (0.45) [0.02]	1.68** (0.44) [0.05]	1.64* (0.43) [0.06]
Fatah	1.03 (0.26) [0.90]	1.11 (0.28) [0.69]	2.68*** (0.71) [0.00]	2.69*** (0.73) [0.00]
Blocking covariates	Yes	No	Yes	No
Strata dummies	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	221	221	225	225

Note: Odds ratios with standard errors within parentheses. p values within brackets. All models include respondent type dummies.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

assignment to treatment, and we control for party identification, respondent type, and the method of randomization.

Table 4 shows that international recognition has a positive and significant effect on individual perceptions of international political support. As seen in columns (1) and (2), international recognition increases the odds of perceiving the positions of the international community and the Palestinians as “almost identical” by approximately 80 percent ($p = .02$). As seen in columns (3) and (4), international recognition also increases the odds of trusting the United Nations “very much” by over 60 percent ($p = .05$). These results show that the recognition of Palestine increased the perceived level of international political support among the Palestinian public, thereby also likely raising perceptions of bargaining strength.

An increase in perceived bargaining strength should also manifest in expectations of a more favorable negotiated settlement. We measure the expected *favorability* of a negotiated settlement using a five-level ordinal variable ranging from “very unfavorable” to “very favorable.” A difference in means test comparing the expected favorability of a negotiated settlement across the treatment and control groups shows that the treatment group rated a prospective negotiated settlement as 0.3 more favorable (about 0.25 standard deviations [SD]) to Palestinian interests than respondents in the control group ($p = .10$). The results of multivariate regression analysis are generally consistent but statistically weaker (see Tables S13 and S14 in the Online Appendix). While not conclusive, these results provide suggestive evidence that international recognition increases the expected favorability of a negotiated settlement in line with the bargaining strength mechanism.

Of course, bargaining strength is not the only causal mechanism through which international recognition may shape attitudes toward territorial compromise. UNGA

recognition could provide an internationally recognized focal point that makes the establishment of a Palestinian state more feasible, thereby increasing popular support for partition (Schelling 1960; Huth, Croco, and Appel 2013).²⁷ As the main gatekeeper of international legitimacy, the UNGA could also affect attitudes toward territorial compromise by legitimizing partition (Hurd 1999). Both of these alternative mechanisms are consistent with our main findings, which show an increase in support for the principle of partition and decrease in support for additional territorial concessions.

While we cannot evaluate multiple observable implications of these mechanisms as we do with bargaining strength, a difference in means test shows that the perceived *feasibility* of establishing a Palestinian state was nearly identical across the treatment and control groups ($\text{diff} = 0.02 \text{ SD}$). And, while the perceived legitimacy of partition was higher in the treatment group, the difference between the two groups is not statistically different from zero ($p = .28$).²⁸ Although it is difficult to rule out these alternative mechanisms with the evidence at hand, our initial exploration suggests that they are less likely to be operating.

Alternative Explanations

Our core finding is that international recognition shapes mass attitudes toward territorial compromise. It is, however, possible that factors other than international recognition could account for the changes in mass attitudes toward partition that we document. The primary alternative explanation for this relationship focuses on international recognition as a prominent policy success for the Fatah party, which spearheaded the Palestinian bid for international recognition. According to this explanation, international recognition is interpreted by Palestinians as evidence of Fatah's efficacy, increasing support for the party and, in turn, for its platform supporting the two-state solution. To investigate this possibility, we turn back to the panel data and examine whether support for Fatah increased after international recognition, driving up support for the two-state solution with it.²⁹

The empirical record does not support this proposition. The results of a simple test of paired difference in means show that the proportion of respondents supporting Fatah before and after international recognition is nearly identical. Support for Fatah is one percentage point lower after recognition, not higher, and this difference is not statistically significant (see Table S16 in the Online Appendix). In contrast, as we showed earlier, there was a marked increase in support for the principle of partition, generally. It is thus unlikely that the real-world shift toward greater support for partition we document is due to an increase in support for Fatah.

However, it is still theoretically possible that the effect of our experimental treatment is due to an artificial rise in support for Fatah. While we deliberately avoided including photos of Fatah leaders—ubiquitous in press coverage of the UNGA vote—in the experimental treatment, the text of the treatment briefly mentions Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas. This raises the possibility that the treatment inadvertently

primed the party identity of Fatah supporters. This heightened party identity could conceivably cause Fatah supporters to express greater support for the two-state solution as this is a key plank in Fatah's platform.

To evaluate this possibility, we reestimate the ordered logit model in Table 2, now including an interaction term interacting the treatment indicator with the party identification variable. If the experimental treatment increased support for the two-state solution by priming party identity, then the treatment should have a greater effect among Fatah supporters than among nonsupporters. In fact, we find the opposite. Among individuals who did not identify with Fatah, the treatment increased support for the principle of partition by over 0.4 or nearly 10 percent of the five-point scale ($p = .099$).³⁰ Among individuals who identified with Fatah, however, the effect of the experimental treatment was smaller and could not be differentiated from zero ($p = .70$). These results demonstrate that the experimental treatment did *not* increase support for territorial compromise by priming the partisan identity of Fatah supporters. Rather, the effect of the experimental treatment is strongest among those respondents who did not identify with Fatah to begin with. This may be because non-Fatah supporters had lower initial levels of support for the two-state solution.

Social desirability bias poses a second alternative explanation for our findings. Social desirability bias is one of the most common and serious sources of bias affecting experimental and survey research findings (Nederhof 1985). In this study, the widespread international support for the two-state solution (implicitly) conveyed by the experimental treatment may have pressured respondents to hide their true preferences and express support for partition.

The results of our panel study suggest that this is not the case. The observational data gathered in the panel survey clearly document a real-world shift toward greater support for partition following international recognition that is not driven by our experimental intervention. Nonetheless, we examine whether social desirability concerns may have influenced subjects' reported support for partition by comparing the effect of the treatment on support for the two-state solution with its effect on respondents' *ideal* preferences regarding borders.³¹ If social desirability bias were driving respondents to express (false) support for partition, the treatment should affect both reported support for the two-state solution and reported ideal preferences about borders.

Again, we do not find this to be the case. Table 5 replicates the analysis in Table 2 using ideal preferences regarding borders as the dependent variable. Ideal preferences regarding borders is measured as a binary variable coded "1" if respondents chose any border resulting from partition as their ideal and "0" if they chose the entire territory. As illustrated in Table 5, the experimental treatment did not increase the small percentage of respondents who chose any set of borders emerging from partition as their ideal borders. In fact, the experimental treatment was negatively associated with choosing partition as one's ideal. These results undermine the possibility that social pressure triggered by the experimental treatment drives our results. These results also support the conclusion that international recognition

Table 5. The Effect of International Recognition on Ideal Borders.

	Any partition as the ideal	
Treatment	0.84 (0.30) [0.62]	0.84 (0.31) [0.64]
Fatah	1.41 (0.50) [0.33]	1.55 (0.58) [0.24]
Blocking covariates	Yes	No
Strata dummies	No	Yes
Observations	207	200

Note: Odds ratios with standard errors within parentheses. *p* values within brackets. All models include respondent type dummies.

p* < .10. *p* < .05. ****p* < .01.

affects attitudes toward territorial compromise by shaping beliefs about pragmatic considerations such as bargaining strength and not by changing fundamental ideals.

Finally, perhaps the effect of international recognition we document in the panel survey is due to the failure at the UNSC in the fall of 2011 rather than to UNGA recognition in the fall of 2012. While this is possible in principle, the timing of the two events suggests it is unlikely. The failure to achieve recognition by the UNSC took place a full year before the success at the UNGA and the second wave of the panel survey. In order for the negative outcome at the UNSC to affect the findings of the survey, the effect would thus not only have had to last an entire year but also to be so strong that it would outweigh the positive effect of being recognized as a state by the UNGA. Given that the struggle for international recognition as a people worthy of sovereignty has long been a central component of Palestinian nationalism and that UNGA recognition was widely viewed as an important milestone in this effort, this possibility seems unlikely.

Conclusion

We find that international recognition affects support for territorial compromise among groups engaged in struggles for self-determination. International recognition increases support for partition as a strategy of conflict resolution at the same time that it decreases willingness to compromise on the territorial terms of partition. We also find evidence consistent with the idea that international recognition exerts this influence by increasing the recognized group's perception of its bargaining strength. These impacts of international recognition challenge the prevailing view that the UNGA has little power to shape the course of ongoing conflicts.

This finding is noteworthy in policy terms because it implies that international recognition offers states an additional instrument with which to promote public support for controversial and contested solutions to self-determination conflicts. Public

opinion matters because public support underlies successful partitions (T. Chapman and Roeder 2007) and emboldens or constrains leaders to make difficult territorial concessions. Leaders in self-determination conflicts are involved in a two-level game in which they must navigate between the demands of their constituency and those of the other side (Shamir and Shikaki 2010). For example, during the negotiations at Camp David in 2000, Arafat repeatedly argued that “Israel did not have a monopoly on accountability and concerns about the [domestic] opposition” (Hanieh 2001, 85; see also Shamir and Shikaki 2010). By increasing popular support for the principle of partition, international recognition makes it easier for leaders to accept a negotiated settlement involving partition. However, to the extent that it decreases support for additional territorial concessions, international recognition may make it more difficult for leaders to accept additional territorial concessions beyond the basic compromise of partition.

At the same time, international recognition may be a more useful policy tool in some contexts than others. Where the challenged state responds to the recognized group’s new bargaining strength with additional concessions, international recognition will shift any negotiated settlement closer to the recognized group’s ideal point.³² This shift is likely to increase the domestic coalition in favor of a settlement among the recognized group and shrink the domestic coalition in favor of a settlement in the challenged state. The substantive political impact of these changes depends on the resulting size of these respective coalitions. If the recognized group’s larger domestic coalition makes it possible to accept a settlement while the challenged state’s smaller domestic coalition does not reduce support for a settlement below the point of viability, international recognition would improve the prospects for conflict resolution. If, however, the recognized group’s larger coalition remains too small to win domestically, or if the pro-settlement coalition within the challenged state becomes too small to win domestically, international recognition would have a null or even a negative effect. Fully assessing the net effect of international recognition on the prospects for conflict resolution would require accounting for all of these factors.

While the Palestinian case allows us to explore the impact of international recognition in an ongoing violent conflict, it raises two potential issues regarding the generalizability of our findings. First, due to the ongoing inaccessibility of the Gaza Strip, our study was conducted only in the West Bank and may not be generalizable to the entire Palestinian population. However, the strong impact of international recognition among non-Fatah supporters suggests that international recognition may also shift attitudes toward territorial compromise in the Hamas-dominated Gaza Strip.

Second, one may also be concerned that the United Nations’ treatment of the Palestinian case is unusual. This could limit the generalizability of our findings if either the timing of recognition or the involvement of the UNGA rather than UNSC were unique. While international recognition generally takes place during or after the implementation of partition, the UNGA recognition of Palestine as a state took place in the midst of an ongoing conflict. Even though it is less common, international

recognition in the midst of conflict is not unique to the Palestinian context. For example, Germany and the European Economic Community recognized Slovenia, and Croatia, and Kosovo, South Ossetia, and Namibia were all recognized by Great Powers before the end of those conflicts. Because international recognition by Great Powers or major regional organizations is also likely to increase the bargaining power of the recognized group, our conclusions should also apply to such cases of recognition. Similarly, while recognition of statehood by the UNGA alone is unusual, we would expect our findings to hold (or be even stronger) in the more typical case of recognition by the UNSC; because UNSC recognition should increase the bargaining power of the recognized group even more than UNGA recognition, it is likely to have an even more pronounced impact on mass attitudes.

Overall, we expect our findings to apply to cases of international recognition by the United Nations, Great Powers, and other powerful states and organizations in which the self-determination movement is much weaker than the state it challenges. Where self-determination movements are much weaker (as is usually the case), international recognition should increase the movement's bargaining power sufficiently to increase support for partition as a strategy of conflict resolution but not so much so that it rejects partition altogether. Where they are not, international recognition could conceivably cause the self-determination movement to reject partition altogether in favor of maximalist demands.

Finally, the finding that international recognition by the UNGA affects attitudes toward territorial compromise suggests that international recognition may also affect other attitudes toward conflict. In particular, international recognition may shape group members' willingness to support the use of violence to achieve collective goals. Further research will investigate the wider impacts of international recognition on conflict.

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Notes

1. Technically, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is not endowed with the legal capacity to “recognize” statehood. Our use of the term “recognition” nonetheless reflects the wide-ranging support for full recognition among member states that state status implies. Indeed, this was explicitly indicated in the text of the UNGA resolution dealing with the status of Palestine (UN General Assembly, 67th session, 2012).
2. Yael Zeira, Field Notes, September 23, 2011.
3. Other factors, including domestic political calculations, may still lead the recognized group to reject entering any particular round of negotiations.
4. A more detailed discussion of both is available in the Online Appendix.
5. Surveys were conducted in the West Bank only due to the closure of the Gaza Strip and historically low survey response rates in East Jerusalem.
6. Governorates, localities, and enumeration areas within most localities were selected in this fashion. Enumeration areas within large Palestinian localities were selected using simple random sampling due to a lack of reliable population data below the city level.
7. Table S1 in the Online Appendix compares the survey proportions to the population proportions.
8. An additional concern may be that our sample of returning respondents differs from attrited respondents in ways that could bias our findings. However, as Table S2 in the Online Appendix shows, these groups are identical on most theoretically relevant covariates, including their baseline (wave 1) levels of support for the principle of partition. Where the two groups do differ, these differences should either bias us against finding an effect of international recognition or cancel out. See the discussion in the Online Appendix.
9. New respondents were drawn from sixteen new localities selected using the same procedures used in the panel survey. We did not administer the survey experiment to returning respondents from wave 1 since doing so would mean that they would no longer have been comparable to themselves prior to UNGA recognition.
10. Table S3 in the Online Appendix shows the balance test comparing the two groups. Where the two groups differ, we control for these differences in the analysis.
11. The number of bins is different in the two curves due to smoothing in the kernel density graph: because the proportion of respondents who weakly support partition is the same as the proportion who strongly support partition after international recognition, there are four bins instead of five.

12. We use ordered logit because support for the principle of partition is measured as a five-level ordinal variable. All results are also robust to the use of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. See Table S4 in the Online Appendix.
13. We operationalize perceptions of the new Egyptian government's political position as the perceived change in the proximity of the Egyptian and Palestinian positions, measured on a five-point scale from "much farther" to "much closer." Attitudes toward the proper role of religion in politics are operationalized as support for religious influence over government, measured as a five-point scale from "strongly disagree" (i.e., strong nonsupport) to "strongly agree."
14. We do not control for the impact of the November 2012 fighting in the Gaza Strip because nearly everybody in our sample reported exposure to it, causing collinearity with international recognition. However, previous research on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict finds that exposure to violence hardens attitudes in the short term and has indeterminate effects in the long term—making it unlikely that violence accounts for a rise in support for partition. See Arian, Shamir, and Ventura (1992), Berrebi and Klor (2008), and Shikaki (2006).
15. The random effects estimator is consistent even with small group sizes, that is, T is small (see, e.g., Gelman and Hill 2007, 276). Results are robust to estimating an ordered logit model with robust clustered standard errors. See Table S5 in the Online Appendix.
16. The non-weighted results are very similar. See Table S6 and the discussion in Section S3 of the Online Appendix.
17. For the bivariate results, see Table S7 in the Online Appendix.
18. We use OLS to estimate the fixed-effects model because, unlike ordered logit, OLS is consistent even with small group sizes (see Greene 2003, section 11.4.2).
19. Twelve strata dummies were created, corresponding to every possible combination of gender, refugee status, and three levels of educational attainment.
20. Party identification is measured as a binary variable where "1" indicates support for the ruling Fatah party and "0" indicates nonsupport. Because refugee status was used in blocked randomization, we also include it as a control variable and thus control for the slight imbalance in this variable as well.
21. See Section S2 for a discussion of these modeling choices and Table S10 in the Online Appendix for estimates of the effect of international recognition on support for the principle of partition excluding these control variables.
22. Results are also robust to estimation using OLS. See Table S9 in the Online Appendix.
23. See question 22(2) in the Online Appendix for the question wording. The original seven-point survey scale used in this question was coarsened into the three-level variable used in the analysis because responses were clustered on "strong opposition." All results are robust to multiple alternative codings of these variables, including grouping neutral respondents with weak opponents (see Table S11 in the Online Appendix).
24. See Table S12 in the Online Appendix and accompanying discussion.
25. We prefer this simple test to the mediation analyses developed by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Imai et al. (2011), which rest on a number of strong assumptions. See Green, Ha, and Bullock (2010).

26. Perceived proximity is measured as a seven-level ordinal variable, where higher values indicate greater perceived proximity. Trust in the United Nations is measured as a five-level ordinal variable, where higher values indicate greater trust.
27. UNGA recognition could also affect the feasibility of establishing a Palestinian state and popular support for partition if it makes Palestinians believe that a third-party guarantor is more likely to emerge to enforce a negotiated settlement (see, e.g., Walter 2002, 43, 97).
28. See the Online Appendix for question wording. As mentioned earlier, multivariate regression analysis yields consistent results. See Table S15 in the Online Appendix.
29. We explore this question using the panel data since, in the survey experiment, the question about party affiliation necessarily preceded the treatment condition.
30. Marginal effects are based on OLS regression analysis and were estimated holding all control variables, which are categorical, at their modal values. For the OLS coefficients and ordered logit odds ratios, see Tables S17 and S18 in the Online Appendix.
31. We asked respondents to select their ideal set of borders among a map showing the entire territory of the 1922 British Mandate of Palestine and two other maps depicting different border configurations that could emerge from partition.
32. This expectation is supported by bargaining theory (Fearon 1993) but depends on the assumption that the challenged state and recognized group have a common interpretation of the impact of international recognition (Wittman 1979). Such a difference in interpretation, together with the rise in Palestinian bargaining strength, may have contributed to the breakdown of the most recent round of Israeli–Palestinian negotiations.

Supplemental Material

The online appendix is available at <http://jcr.sagepub.com/supplemental>.

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