

# Politics and Polarization: Social Identity Framework for Understanding Political Divisions

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of social identity in shaping political polarization in Israel, utilizing Cameron's multidimensional model of social identity. By analyzing the cognitive centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties of various political and ethnic groups, the study highlights how identity dynamics drive political behavior and intergroup relations. Focusing on key identity fault lines such as the Ultra-Orthodox vs. Secular Jews, Jewish Israelis vs. Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Right-Wing Nationalists vs. Left-Leaning Secularists, the paper demonstrates how political identities are deeply embedded in the social fabric of Israeli society. The concept of "invited unfriending" in digital spaces serves as a contemporary manifestation of boundary-setting that reinforces ideological homogeneity and exacerbates polarization. Through these identity dynamics, the study emphasizes the psychological foundations of polarization and the importance of inclusive political strategies to address these divisions. By applying this framework to Israeli politics, the paper contributes to broader discussions on the global rise of identity-based polarization and offers insights for other democratic societies facing similar challenges. The findings call for educational reform, digital literacy programs, and inclusive policy interventions to mitigate polarization and foster democratic cohesion.

**Keywords:** Social Identity, Political Polarization, Israeli Politics, In-Group Affect, Digital Polarization

## Introduction

Israel's sociopolitical environment stands out as one of the most polarized within the developed world, marked by deeply entrenched divisions that cut across religious, ethnic, national, and ideological lines. This polarization is visible in political discourse and electoral outcomes and reflected in patterns of social interaction, institutional design, and collective identity. While traditional political science approaches emphasized the significance of geopolitical threats, security concerns, economic disparities, and institutional fragmentation in shaping Israeli politics, these factors alone are insufficient to fully explain the intensity and persistence of internal societal divisions.

This paper seeks to explore the role of social identity in Israeli political life by applying Cameron's three-dimensional model of social identity, which includes cognitive centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties [1]. Each of these components offers a unique lens through which to understand how individuals'

affiliations with specific social groups, such as religious or secular communities, ethnic or national identities, or ideological blocs (left-wing vs. right-wing), shape political behavior and reinforce divisions [2]. Cognitive centrality refers to the degree to which a particular group membership is central to an individual's self-concept. In-group affect captures the emotional valence or positive feelings associated with belonging to a group. In-group ties denote the perceived strength of connection and solidarity with other group members.

By applying this framework, the paper aims to illuminate the psychological underpinnings of political polarization in Israel, moving beyond surface-level analyses to examine how identity salience, emotional attachment, and group cohesion contribute to the formation of political attitudes, voting patterns, and intergroup tensions. This approach offers an understanding of why political divisions in Israel are not merely disagreements over policy but are experienced as existential conflicts rooted in deeply held beliefs about belonging, legitimacy, and collective purpose.

### Theoretical Framework

The concept of social identity plays a major role in understanding human behavior, particularly within politically charged and polarized societies. The belongingness hypothesis, as articulated by Baumeister and Leary, underscores a fundamental human need: the intrinsic drive to form and maintain meaningful interpersonal connections [3]. This psychological need for belonging is seen as essential to well-being, emotional stability, and the development of a coherent self-concept. According to this hypothesis, individuals are motivated by a deep-seated desire to be part of groups and communities, where they can experience a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and social support. However, while the need for belonging fosters group formation and cohesion, it can also have divisive consequences in the context of political polarization.

In-group preference, or the tendency to gravitate toward those who share similar values, norms, cultural markers, or identity traits, reinforces the boundaries between different social groups. This phenomenon becomes particularly problematic in politically polarized societies, where group identities become strongly intertwined with political ideologies, religious beliefs, or ethnic affiliations [4]. The preference for in-group members, while providing a sense of belonging and security, can perpetuate feelings of mistrust, fear, and animosity toward out-group members. This dynamic, in turn, complicates efforts to foster broader societal cohesion and collaboration, particularly in environments where political polarization is exacerbated by identity-based divides.

A more nuanced understanding of social identity is provided by Cameron's multidimensional model, which breaks down social identity into three interrelated dimensions: cognitive centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties [1]. This framework offers valuable insight into how individuals' identities are shaped by their social group affiliations and how these affiliations influence their political and social behavior.

Each dimension of Cameron's model contributes to a broader understanding of political polarization and its psychological underpinnings:

Cognitive Centrality refers to how central an individual's group membership is to their self-concept. In highly polarized contexts, people tend to strongly identify with particular social groups, and these identities become fundamental to how they define themselves. For instance, a person who identifies strongly as part of a political party, religious community, or ethnic group may view these affiliations as essential to their sense of self. This centrality influences their worldview, shaping their attitudes, perceptions, and responses to political events. The more central a group is to one's identity, the more likely it is to influence behaviors, including voting preferences, policy stances, and interactions with others.

In-group affect refers to the emotional significance of belonging to a particular group. It captures the positive feelings and emotional attachment individuals experience when they consider themselves part of a group. This emotional connection can manifest as pride, loyalty, and attachment to the group's values, history, and collective goals. The strength of these

positive feelings toward one's in-group can enhance solidarity and promote cooperative behavior within the group. However, in politically polarized settings, in-group affect can also exacerbate divisions, as individuals may come to view their group as morally superior, leading to animosity or hostility toward out-groups.

In-group ties denote the perceived strength of connection and solidarity with other members of the group. This dimension emphasizes the social bonds that form within groups and the sense of belonging that arises from these relationships. Strong in-group ties can foster a sense of community, mutual support, and shared purpose. However, they can also create barriers to intergroup cooperation and understanding, particularly when individuals are strongly aligned with their group and view out-group members as less deserving of solidarity or empathy. In situations of political conflict, the strength of in-group ties can be a driving force in rallying individuals around collective causes and reinforcing group-specific goals, which often involve opposition to out-group agendas.

Together, these three dimensions of Cameron's model provide a comprehensive lens through which to examine the psychological mechanisms underlying political behavior. Cognitive centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties all shape how individuals perceive political issues, how they react to out-group members, and how they engage in collective political action. These factors also play a critical role in understanding voting patterns, intergroup relations, and the nature of political conflict in societies characterized by identity-based divisions.

When applied to the Israeli sociopolitical context, this framework offers valuable insights into how social identity dynamics contribute to the deep political divides between different groups, such as Jewish and Arab citizens, secular and religious communities, and left-wing and right-wing political factions. By examining the psychological processes that drive group identification, emotional attachment to one's group, and the strength of in-group solidarity, we gain a clearer understanding of the psychological foundations of political polarization in Israel. This model also provides a useful tool for exploring the broader social and political implications of identity-based dynamics and how they influence individuals' responses to political events, policies, and social conflicts.

### Methodology

In today's increasingly polarized political environments, identity boundary-setting has taken on new and dynamic forms, particularly within the realm of social media. One significant manifestation of this boundary-setting is the phenomenon of "invited unfriending," where individuals actively encourage others to sever their connections due to ideological or political differences. This process reflects the heightened tensions within societies and contributes to the deepening of social divisions and the reinforcement of in-group versus out-group dynamics. The concept of invited unfriending serves as an interesting and timely case study for understanding how modern identity politics are enacted and mediated through digital spaces.

"Invited unfriending" refers to the act of individuals urging or prompting others, typically within the context of social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter, to unfollow or unfriend them as a result of conflicting political views, ideological stances,

or moral disagreements. Unlike the more passive process of unfriending, which often occurs without direct prompting, invited unfriending involves an explicit invitation or demand, thus heightening the sense of division between individuals or groups. This action can be seen as a form of symbolic boundary-setting where individuals seek to preserve or protect their own group identity by distancing themselves from opposing viewpoints or those perceived as belonging to out-group categories.

The phenomenon of politically motivated unfriending on social media can be understood through the lens of "digital boundary regulation" - a process by which individuals actively curate their online social environments to manage ideological conflict, preserve emotional well-being, and maintain a coherent political identity. This behavior reflects an interplay between affective polarization, selective exposure, and identity-protective cognition. Users often disconnect from others not simply to avoid discomfort, but to affirm their belonging to like-minded communities and to protect their self-concept in an increasingly politicized digital space.

The phenomenon described in can be summarized under the theoretical concept of "boundary regulation in digital communication" [5]. This concept refers to how individuals actively manage their social and ideological boundaries in online spaces, such as social media, by curating their digital networks. In the case of invited unfriending, individuals use public statements to sever ties with those who hold conflicting views, thereby reinforcing in-group cohesion and protecting personal or ideological identity. This act functions as a self-directed and performative boundary-setting strategy in response to political or ideological conflict.

Across multiple studies, politically motivated unfriending on social media is understood as a strategic act of digital boundary regulation, used to manage conflict, preserve self-identity, and maintain a sense of community. This behavior is closely tied to affective polarization, emotional responses to disagreement, and the need for ideological homophily in one's online network. Zhang & Shoenberger found that emotions such as anger and anxiety, along with a strong need to belong, significantly predict unfriending behavior [6]. People use unfriending to emotionally regulate and align their networks with personal values. Zhu & Skoric showed that unfriending has consequences for political engagement, especially for those with minority opinions, who retreat from discourse to avoid backlash, reducing pluralism in online discussions [7]. Baysha focused on post-revolution Ukraine and revealed that unfriending was driven by perceived inauthenticity, moral outrage, and the desire to defend one's version of "truth" [8]. Unfriending was not random but ideologically loaded. John & Dvir-Gvirsman found that those with higher political engagement and larger networks were more likely to unfriend during politically tense moments, especially if their networks lacked ideological homophily [9].

### Application to Israeli Politics

Social identity plays a fundamental and decisive role in shaping the political landscape of Israel, a country where group affiliations are powerful drivers of political behavior, intergroup relations, and the broader sociopolitical environment [10]. Israel's political sphere is marked by profound divisions along religious, ethnic,

and ideological lines, each of which reinforces distinct identity-based fault lines that play out in everyday political interactions. This dynamic is not unique to Israel but resonates globally in politically polarized societies. The persistence of these divisions is illuminated by Cameron's model of social identity, which posits that political identity is not merely a rational preference but is deeply anchored in cognitive centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties [1]. These three elements of social identity serve as essential mechanisms that shape the way individuals and groups engage in political life and maintain allegiance to political ideologies.

Cameron's framework offers an insightful lens for understanding the persistent divisions within Israeli politics, where group identities are crucial to the formation of political ideologies, voting patterns, and intergroup relations [1]. The framework underscores that political identities are not simply intellectual positions but are emotionally charged, rooted in the psychological need for belonging and security within one's group [4]. In Israel, this attachment to group identity is particularly pronounced, with religious groups (such as the Ultra-Orthodox Haredi), ethnic groups (like Jewish Israelis and Palestinian citizens of Israel), and political factions (right-wing vs. left-wing) representing distinct in-groups that are tightly bound by shared values and norms. This intense in-group cohesion often leads to out-group exclusion, as political and social boundaries between groups are reinforced, resulting in the marginalization of the other [11]. Moreover, as Cameron suggested, these boundaries are not merely symbolic but are integral to how individuals view themselves and others in the political sphere, fostering an environment of polarization [1].

In this context, social identity theory offers an essential explanation for why Israeli politics is marked by ideological rigidity and deep social fragmentation. The enduring role of social identity in Israeli politics highlights the psychological and emotional forces at play in shaping political behavior and decision-making. Understanding how these identity-based dynamics contribute to the broader sociopolitical landscape is critical for addressing the challenges of political polarization and social division in Israel.

### Ultra-Orthodox vs. Secular Jews

One of the most prominent identity fault lines in Israeli politics is the divide between the Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) community and secular Jews. This division is not merely a matter of differing religious practices but is rooted in deep cultural, ideological, and political tensions that manifest in debates over key issues such as military conscription, religious authority, and the funding of religious institutions [12].

These tensions are amplified by the strong cognitive centrality of religious identity within the Haredi community, where religious affiliation is intricately woven into the self-concept and political orientation of individuals [2]. For Haredi voters, political decisions are guided by religious duty and the imperatives of group cohesion rather than by secular, economic, or ideological concerns. This emphasis on religious identity results in a highly cohesive voting bloc, where in-group ties and shared beliefs foster collective political identity, making the Haredi community resistant to the secular liberal ideologies prevalent in broader Israeli society.

The emotional attachment to in-group identity (in-group affect) further intensifies political polarization. The Haredi community views its religious identity as not just a matter of personal belief but as a critical aspect of its survival and its role in Israeli society. Consequently, any perceived threat to religious authority, such as challenges to the exemption from military service or efforts to reduce state funding for religious institutions, is often framed as an existential threat to the community's identity and way of life [11].

This emotional investment in religious affiliation leads to heightened suspicion and mistrust of secular Jews, reinforcing the ideological divide between the two groups. Moreover, as the Haredi community becomes more politically active, these dynamics contribute to the entrenchment of divisive narratives that shape the national discourse, exacerbating the fragmentation of Israeli society along religious and ideological lines [13].

In this context, the cognitive centrality and in-group affect dimensions of Cameron's model of social identity are evident [1]. For the Haredi community, religious identity is not only central to their self-concept but also serves as a defining feature of their political behavior, creating a clear boundary between their group and the secular majority. This boundary reinforces both political cohesion within the in-group and ideological hostility toward the out-group, resulting in a polarized political climate that mirrors broader global trends in which group-based identities shape political conflict [14].

### **Jewish Israelis vs. Palestinian Citizens**

A significant and enduring fault line in Israeli politics is the relationship between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian citizens of Israel. This divide is rooted in competing national identities, differing views on the legitimacy of the state, and the complex question of minority rights. Khatib emphasizes that the narratives of Jewish national identity and Palestinian Arab identity are often seen as mutually exclusive, with both groups framing the conflict as a zero-sum struggle over territory, culture, and recognition. For Jewish Israelis, cognitive centrality is strongly tied to the notion of Israel as a Jewish state, with their political identity shaped by collective memory, Zionist ideology, and the historical trauma of the Holocaust [15-16]. This sense of identity underpins political affiliations and supports the vision of a secure Jewish homeland, where national and political goals are closely intertwined.

In contrast, Palestinian citizens experience a deeply ingrained sense of exclusion and marginalization within the Israeli political system. Their national identity, rooted in Arab culture and history, is often denied or minimized by the Jewish-majority state, further entrenching their feelings of disenfranchisement and second-class citizenship [11]. This exclusion is not just political but also cultural, as Palestinian citizens frequently face discrimination in terms of education, employment, and access to state resources. Palestinian citizens' struggle for recognition and equality is central to their political identity, and their grievances with the state are framed as part of a broader quest for self-determination and cultural survival [17].

These conflicting identities have far-reaching implications for intergroup relations, particularly in the context of political

polarization [18]. The centrality of national identity for both groups exacerbates the political deadlock between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian citizens. Each side perceives the other as an existential threat to their respective identity and rights, leading to a vicious cycle of conflict and mutual alienation. This perception of out-group threat reinforces the cognitive centrality of political identity for both Jewish Israelis and Palestinian citizens, as their self-concept is increasingly shaped by the ideological and territorial disputes that define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Furthermore, the emotional dimension of in-group affect, as articulated in Cameron's model of social identity, plays a crucial role in maintaining these divisions [1]. Political leaders and activists on both sides frame the opposing group as a threat to their political goals and cultural and existential survival. This emotionally charged rhetoric further entrenches political polarization and limits the space for dialogue or cooperation between the two groups. As explained by Shomron, the persistence of identity-based conflict reflects the power of social identity in shaping political behavior and intergroup relations, often at the expense of potential cooperation and reconciliation [19].

The implications of this divide are profound, as it perpetuates a cycle of grievance, exclusion, and conflict [20]. In this context, the political identities of both Jewish Israelis and Palestinian citizens are not just products of individual beliefs but are deeply embedded in broader historical narratives and group affiliations, shaping political outcomes and fueling polarization in Israeli society [21]. As such, addressing these identity-based divides is essential for advancing peace, equity, and social cohesion in Israel.

### **Right-Wing Nationalists vs. Left-Leaning Secularists**

The divide between right-wing nationalists and left-leaning secularists is another crucial identity fault line within Israeli politics, reflecting deep ideological and cultural tensions that shape political behavior and intergroup relations. This divide was particularly pronounced during the 2023-2024 judicial reform protests, where issues related to the role of the judiciary, government power, and democratic principles came to the forefront [22]. These protests were fueled by longstanding ideological divisions, with digital platforms emerging as key battlegrounds for the expression and reinforcement of political identity [23]. They highlighted the stark contrast between right-wing nationalists, who emphasized national sovereignty and the primacy of Jewish identity in the state, and left-leaning secularists, who advocated for the preservation of democratic checks and balances, judicial independence, and equality for all citizens.

Digital platforms played a significant role in amplifying these ideological differences by allowing individuals to engage primarily with like-minded individuals, thereby creating echo chambers that reinforced existing beliefs and reduced the possibility of cross-ideological dialogue [24]. This process of ideological polarization is a key component of the social identity dynamics that shape Israeli politics. As users interact predominantly within their ideological "bubbles," they are exposed to narratives that validate their views and frame

political opponents as existential threats. According to Cohen, this trend leads to the dehumanization of out-group members and heightens emotional polarization, as political adversaries are perceived not as fellow citizens but as enemies of the in-group's values and principles [24].

These patterns of digital polarization reflect the cognitive centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties that Cameron's model of social identity outlines [1]. In the context of Israeli politics, these dimensions manifest in how individuals' identities are shaped not just by policy preferences but by deeper, more visceral attachments to religious, ethnic, and national affiliations. For right-wing nationalists, political identity is often intertwined with a vision of Israel as a Jewish state, where the preservation of Jewish culture, religion, and sovereignty is paramount. Conversely, left-leaning secularists place a greater emphasis on universal democratic values, such as equality, justice, and the protection of individual rights, often in opposition to the nationalistic agenda promoted by right-wing factions [20].

This division underscores the fragmentation of the Israeli political landscape, where political disagreements are increasingly framed as existential struggles between competing national, ethnic, and ideological groups. The role of social media in reinforcing these divisions is particularly concerning, as it limits opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between ideologically opposing groups. Instead of fostering mutual understanding, digital platforms often exacerbate the perception of political opponents as threats to the in-group's identity, deepening the divide between right-wing nationalists and left-leaning secularists [11].

As Cameron argues, political identity is deeply rooted in social identity processes, where individuals' political views are inextricably linked to their group affiliations [1]. In the case of Israel, these affiliations are not merely abstract political positions but are entangled with personal and collective narratives of survival, belonging, and cultural identity. Consequently, the fragmentation of Israeli society into increasingly polarized groups reflects broader shifts in the way politics is understood and practiced, moving from ideological debate to identity-based conflict. This trend poses significant challenges to social cohesion, democratic principles, and the capacity for meaningful political dialogue in Israel [25].

The implications of this divide are not limited to the political sphere. They also have social and cultural ramifications. The entrenchment of identity-based political affiliations further complicates efforts to build bridges between different segments of Israeli society [24]. Addressing these challenges requires a broader recognition of the role that social identity plays in shaping political behavior and an acknowledgment of the need for inclusive dialogue and empathy across ideological boundaries.

### Analysis

Cameron's multidimensional model of social identity offers a robust theoretical framework for understanding the complex dynamics of political polarization, especially in the Israeli context [1]. By integrating cognitive centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties, this model provides insight into how social identities shape political behavior, influence intergroup relations, and perpetuate political divisions. Gallili explains that the rise

of social media and citizen journalism introduces alternative narratives and challenges mainstream framing, though this has also contributed to polarization and misinformation [26]. While Israeli media's largely unified wartime reporting stands in contrast to more diverse international media coverage, which includes critical perspectives on the conflict, the commentary emphasizes the global implications of media framing in shaping public perception and international opinion. Golan-Nadir emphasize the lack of public services at the national level due to institutional constraints, leading to societal dissatisfaction as expressed by public opinion [27].

This unique social division is characterized by Kennet as the search for an 'organizing principle' for the State of Israel in the present era [28]. This analysis brings to the conclusion that sensitive topics are underreported or framed in alignment with state interests, as identity is not merely symbolic or peripheral to political behavior. While Samov and Yishai argue that the expansion of citizenship was made possible owing to a gradual process of liberalization and growing institutional receptivity, the division reflects Cameron's theory [29,1]. This division is between religious and secular Jews, Jewish Israelis and Palestinian citizens, and the ideological divide between right-wing nationalists and left-leaning secularists. These identities are not just markers of group affiliation but are central to how individuals navigate their political world, often driving political allegiance and intergroup tensions. Krivoy & Rosenthal explain that the events of October 7, 2023, and the subsequent war have starkly exposed the shortcomings of Israel's public service [30].

As Israel grapples with rising polarization and growing challenges to democratic norms, understanding the psychological and social foundations of political behavior becomes crucial. The continued reinforcement of in-group boundaries, such as through practices like "invited unfriending" on social media, exacerbates divisions and limits the potential for constructive political dialogue. These identity-based exclusions can undermine democratic processes by reducing opportunities for cross-cutting political engagement and preventing coalition-building across ideological lines [24]. Recognizing that these identity foundations play a critical role in political polarization allows for a more nuanced approach to addressing the sources of conflict within Israeli society. Taher connects this to the Zionist project of territorial expansion and which fragments Palestinian identity and existence across economic, social, political, and geographic lines [31].

This analysis contributes to academic research by applying a well-established model of social identity to the context of Israeli politics, a field in which identity has been discussed in terms of national, ethnic, or religious divisions but not always through the lens of psychological and social identity frameworks. By highlighting the roles of cognitive centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties in shaping political behavior, this paper provides a fresh perspective on the dynamics of Israeli political polarization. Moreover, it underscores the relevance of social identity theory in explaining the mechanisms of digital polarization, offering a novel contribution to understanding the interplay between online and offline identity politics in contemporary democracies.

The findings also have implications for broader societies grappling with increasing political polarization. The processes

identified - the reinforcement of group-based identities through digital platforms, the deepening of ideological divides, and the reduction of intergroup dialogue - are not unique to Israel but are observed in many democratic societies worldwide. In other countries, too, the rise of social media echo chambers and the cultivation of political identities have similarly contributed to political fragmentation and the erosion of democratic cohesion.

To address the polarization exacerbated by identity dynamics, a multifaceted approach is needed. Educational reforms aimed at promoting civic empathy, digital literacy programs designed to counteract the effects of echo chambers, and policy interventions focused on fostering inclusive governance are critical steps in mitigating the negative impacts of identity-based polarization. It is argued that inclusive governance, which ensures that all social groups feel represented and valued, is essential to strengthening democratic resilience. This approach is equally relevant in other societies where identity politics and digital polarization threaten the stability of democratic institutions.

This research highlights the importance of understanding and addressing the identity foundations of political behavior, both in Israel and beyond. By recognizing the centrality of identity in political polarization, policymakers, scholars, and citizens can begin to craft strategies that reduce polarization, foster more inclusive political environments, and ensure the long-term health of democracies. Through these efforts, societies can navigate the complex terrain of political identity, reducing divisions and promoting a more cohesive and resilient democratic future.

## Conclusion

The political landscape of Israel is profoundly shaped by deep-seated identity fault lines, where group affiliations - whether based on religion, ethnicity, or political ideology - serve as powerful drivers of political behavior and intergroup relations. As demonstrated through the divides between the Ultra-Orthodox and secular Jews, Jewish Israelis and Palestinian citizens, and right-wing nationalists and left-leaning secularists, political identity in Israel is closely tied to cognitive centrality, in-group affect, and emotional attachment to group membership, as outlined in Cameron's model of social identity [1]. These identity-based divides are further exacerbated by modern communication platforms, such as social media, which often act as echo chambers, reinforcing existing beliefs and amplifying polarization.

The analysis of these fault lines highlights how Israeli politics is increasingly shaped by existential group-based struggles, where political opponents are not just adversaries but perceived threats to the very identity and survival of the in-group. As political identity becomes more entangled with cultural, religious, and ethnic affiliations, the possibility for meaningful dialogue and collaboration between opposing groups diminishes. This growing polarization poses significant challenges to the fabric of Israeli democracy, where cross-group cooperation and mutual understanding are critical to addressing the country's complex socio-political issues.

To foster a more cohesive and resilient democratic society, it is essential to recognize the profound role that social identity plays in shaping political behavior and public discourse. Theoretical

frameworks like Cameron's model provide valuable insights into how identity-based processes influence political polarization [1]. Moving forward, efforts to bridge the divides in Israeli society must focus on fostering inclusive civic identity, reducing the emotional and psychological barriers to cross-ideological engagement, and promoting dialogue that transcends deeply entrenched group loyalties. Only through such efforts can Israeli society hope to mitigate the divisive effects of political polarization and work towards a more unified and democratic future.

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