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Moral Dilemmas in Military Situations: Proportionality Principle, Religiosity, Political Attitudes, and Authoritarian Personality

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The current study focuses on a moral dilemma in military situations: the amount of force to be used in order to neutralize a "most wanted" terrorist. This study examines the association between this moral dilemma with 4 independent variables: agreement with the proportionality principle (mediating variable), level of religiosity, authoritarian personality, and political attitudes. Three equal groups of participants (together, $N = 357$) were included: Israeli regular army combat soldiers, Israeli reserve combat soldiers, and Israeli students. In accordance with the study hypotheses, the 4 independent variables significantly correlated with each other and with moral decisions. Structural equation modeling indicated that agreement with the proportionality principle is the best predictor of moral decision, and mediated the association between level of religiosity and political attitudes and moral decisions.

Keywords: moral dilemma, proportionality principle, level of religiosity, authoritarian personality, political attitudes

Throughout the long years of conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, Israeli infantry units have often been sent on missions to arrest or kill a terrorist hiding out in a house containing other people. Many times when the targeted terrorist realizes he is surrounded, he resists arrest and opens fire at the soldiers. In each of these cases, the Israeli soldiers face a moral dilemma: mission completion versus the risk of harming uninvolved noncombatant civilians. Such an asymmetric war between state and nonstate forces and the wide Israeli media exposure of these events are the background for the current study.

The authors presented this moral dilemma to three groups of participants: regular combat soldiers, combat reserve soldiers, and students. The dilemma examined the amount of force to be used in order to capture or kill a "most wanted" dangerous terrorist. Moreover, such situations involve small units or even a lone soldier encountering a terrorist, and there is no time for thinking or getting an order from superiors. This dilemma is very relevant to a wide range of war situations in which soldiers have to choose, sometimes in a very short time and under stress, between mission completion and collateral damage: the risk of harming uninvolved civilians (Kamm, 2005; Kasher & Yadlin, 2005). As a result, it is important to understand what factors are associated with military moral decisions such as the one under study. This understanding might also be valuable for preparation of soldiers for future deployment.

In the examined dilemma the higher use of force means higher risk of collateral damage and lower risk of casualties among the soldiers and vice versa. Accordingly, the amount of force used by participants represents their moral decision in this study. This study examines the association between the moral decision as to how much force should be used for accomplishing the mission and four personal characteristics: level of agreement with the proportionality principle, level of religiosity, authoritarian personality, and political attitudes.

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Proportionality Principle

Proportionality is a general principle in "just war theory" (e.g., Brooks, 2012) manifested in the "international law of armed conflict" (e.g., Solis, 2010). For the present purposes, the proportionality principle requires that in a military action that involves gaining some military advantage, on the one hand, and causing some collateral damage, on the other hand, the extent to which the action results in military advantage justifies the collateral damage caused be considered in advance. On a basic level of consideration, it is important to find out whether combatants are willing to include the balance of military advantage and collateral damage in their considerations.

On a more sophisticated level, it is important to find out whether, given the inclusion of such balance considerations in their decision-making processes, the balance is properly drawn and considered by military decision makers (Hurka, 2005; Kasher & Yadlin, 2005). The present study investigates attitudes on the more basic level of the two. By "agreement with the proportionality principle," in the present study, the authors mean an attitude that leads to using balance considerations between the expected military advantage and collateral damage. However, to the best of our knowledge, agreement with the proportional principle in context of a military moral dilemma has not been investigated.

Based on a comprehensive review of the literature, the authors hypothesized that more agreement with the proportionality principle represents more democratic attitudes (Brighouse & Fleurbaey, 2010) and support for humane behavior in a war situation (May, 2008). The authors hypothesized that when agreement with proportionality is higher, agreement with the use of force would be lower, when solving the moral dilemma presented in this study. The authors further hypothesized that agreement with proportionality—representing more specific behavioral or action tendencies during a military situation—would mediate the associations between moral decisions and level of religiosity, authoritarian personality, and political attitudes.

Moral Dilemmas

Moral dilemmas arise in situations in which each possible course of action breaches some otherwise binding moral principle. In psychological studies, moral dilemmas refer to situations requiring individuals to make decisions in the context of conflicting moral rules (e.g., Broeders, van den Bos, Müller, & Ham, 2011). In actual situations of moral dilemma, as well as in studies examining the issue, people are asked to choose between contradicting moral rules (Lammers & Stapel, 2009). Unlike the current study, most moral dilemma studies deal with these dilemmas within a wide range of civil life issues (e.g., Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

The various studies examining adults resolving moral dilemmas can be classified into four prominent main areas. First, a number of studies have indicated that resolving moral dilemmas is often based on intuitive thinking (Haidt, 2001; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2009; Valdesolo & Desteno, 2006). Thus, decisions resolving moral dilemmas are made quickly and are automatically affected by situational factors such as social or cultural circumstances. Second, some studies have examined various situational factors affecting resolving moral dilemmas such as the effect of stress and other situational factors (Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Felps, & Lim, 2009; Starcke, Polzer, Wolf, & Brand, 2011). Third, other studies have focused on cognitive processes in order to explain how a person makes decisions in situations that require him/her to choose between sacrificing a few in order to rescue many others (Greene & Haidt, 2002; Seiler, Fischer, & Ooi, 2010; Shenhav & Greene, 2010). Finally, still other studies have examined the association between the emotional dimension, personality characteristics, and moral decisions (Detert, Treviño, & Sweitzer, 2008; Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008; Walker & Frimer, 2007). Overall, and based on a comprehensive review of the literature, it is possible to conclude that various individual, as well as environmental, factors are associated with how people resolve moral dilemmas.

Moral Dilemmas and the War on Terrorism

The war against terror involves a fight between army forces and terror organizations hid-

ing within the civilian population. One of the differences between the two stems from the fact that army forces operate under laws and agreements signed by the states under the principle of "just war," whereas terrorist organizations are not committed to these roles and, among other techniques, they often use civilians as human shields (Schoenekase, 2004). The integration of terrorists among innocent civilians increases the risk of collateral damage, which most armies try to minimize in the war against terrorism (e.g., Kamm, 2005; Kasher & Yadlin, 2005). At the same time, more caution regarding civilians might put the soldiers and their tasks at higher risk.

In the current study, participants had to choose between two conflicting values: (a) accomplishing the mission by using heavy fire (e.g., antitank missiles), which means less risk for the soldiers and higher risks of collateral damage—this is the way the mission is accomplished in accordance with a very important Israel Defense Forces (IDF) ethical value, *perseverance*, which demands mission accomplishment; and (b) using a highly restricted amount of fire, or even no fire at all, in order to avoid collateral damage (e.g., warning before using force, trying to negotiate, retreating), which also means higher risk for the soldiers. Such a strategy of action matches another IDF value, *purity of arms*. Both values are part of the IDF ethical code (Israel Defense Forces, 2012). Based on the literature review and an earlier study (Kimhi, 2014), the authors hypothesized that the following four personal characteristics would predict the amount of force to be used in the situation presented to participants in this study: level of agreement with the proportionality principle, level of religiosity, authoritarian personality, and political attitudes.

In a former study, Kimhi (2014) examined two groups of combat soldiers (regular vs. reserve) resolving the same moral dilemma. In the current study, the authors added a student group as a third group. This group of students served as a control group, in order to learn more about how different people solve moral dilemmas in military situations related to the war against terror. The authors hypothesized that students would be less experienced with a real situation like the presented dilemma, as the majority of them did not serve in infantry combat units. Additionally, the authors wanted to ascertain whether there would be gender differences in the student group regarding this moral dilemma.

The concept of moral decisions in the present study refers to how an individual resolves the moral dilemma he or she is facing: the amount of firepower to use in order to kill or capture a terrorist versus the risk of harming civilians. The moral dilemma examined in the current study differs from those in many moral dilemma studies reported in the literature (Bartels, 2008; Beauchamp, 2001; Lammers & Stapel, 2009). First, the situation in the current study is characterized by a high level of uncertainty and participants do not know what the results of their decisions are. In other words, there is no option for an immediate outcome-based moral decision (Bartels, 2008; Beauchamp, 2001). Second, the situation presented to participants (two groups of soldiers) was realistic for them and described a situation that is part of their training and that many soldiers have already experienced. Third, the decisions to be made were not between two choices (e.g., Shenhav & Greene, 2010) but rather determined the amount of force to be used while facing the risk of collateral damage. However, like other moral dilemmas, there was no clear, sharp, and practical distinction known to everyone in advance between right and wrong decisions, and each participant had to make a practical moral decision in the given context of conflicting moral values or norms.

Personal Characteristics

The current study examined three personal characteristics: level of religiosity, political attitudes, and authoritarian personality. Existing studies (Canetti-Nisim, Halperin, Sharvit, & Hobfoll, 2009; Feldman, 2003; Sullivan & Transue, 1999) indicated that these three personal characteristics represent a general tendency toward conservatism and adherence to conventional norms and values. Moreover, earlier studies (e.g., Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003) have indicated that higher religiosity is correlated with a more authoritarian personality and more right-wing political attitudes. The authors hypothesized that these characteristics would significantly correlate with the proportionality principle as well as predicting moral decisions: when there is less agreement with the proportionality principle, the person is

likely more authoritarian, has greater religiosity and right-wing political attitudes, and will agree with more use of force.

Religiosity. Level of religiosity represents not only the extent to which a person believes in a supernatural entity of ultimate reality but also his or her lifestyle (e.g., the extent of observance, prayer) and overall religious life (James, 1902/1958). Psychologists of religion point to inherent conflicts between strong religious convictions and democratic attitudes (Schwartz & Huismans, 1995). For example, surveys carried out in Belgium (Duriez, Luyten, Snauwaert, & Hutsebaut, 2002) found that religious orthodoxy predicted nondemocratic and intolerant attitudes. Other studies revealed that atheists are more tolerant of political dissent than believers (Sullivan & Transue, 1999). However, some studies have questioned the negative association between religiosity and democratic values (e.g., Canetti-Nisim, 2004). In addition, studies have indicated that there is association between political attitudes and level of religiosity in Israel: higher level of religiosity is associated with more right-wing political attitudes (Wald & Martinez, 2001).

Political attitudes. Political attitudes in Israel refer mainly to issues of willingness to cede or give up territories in order to reach a long-term agreement with the Palestinians. More specifically, the issue involves the future of the territories in the West Bank, occupied during the 1967 war. Conservative/right-wing attitudes correspond to less willingness to cede territories in the West Bank. In addition, studies have indicated that, similar to other countries, in Israel, right-wing political attitudes are associated with more conservatism (e.g., Canetti-Nisim & Pedahzur, 2003).

A few studies have examined the associations between moral decisions and political attitudes (Chong & Marshall, 1999; Emler & Stace, 1999; Kimhi, 2014). These studies have indicated an association between moral thinking and political orientation: More right-wing political attitudes (e.g., more conservatism, greater tendency toward nationalism and to annex the West Bank territories to Israel) correlated with a tendency toward less support for human rights. Earlier studies in Israel indicated the importance of political attitudes regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the associations between political attitudes and a large range of topics, including those connected to military service (Canetti-Nisim et al., 2009; Halperin, Canetti, Hobfoll, & Johnson, 2009; Kimhi & Sagy, 2008).

Authoritarian personality. Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford (1950) developed the F-scale to measure an authoritarian personality. The construct of authoritarianism has extensively been studied (e.g., Altemeyer, 1996; McFarland, 2000). This construct has been both criticized (e.g., Martin, 2001) and supported (Altemeyer, 1988, 1996). Studies have indicated that authoritarianism is associated with various patterns of behavior and attitudes: adherence to conventional norms and values, uncritical submission to authorities, and aggressive feelings toward people violating the norms (Altemeyer, 1998); more hostility toward out-groups and opposition to democratization processes in ex-communist countries (Ekehammar, Akrami, Gylje, & Zakrisson, 2004); a higher level of prejudice (Akrami & Ekehammar, 2006); negative attitudes toward various ethnic groups (e.g., Akrami, Ekehammar, & Araya, 2000); negative attitudes toward democratic values (Feldman, 2003); and preference for conservative right-wing political attitudes (e.g., Jost et al., 2003). Overall, and based on the existing literature, an authoritarian personality is an accepted measure for a conservative worldview, conformity, and a lower level of support for democratic values (e.g., McCann, 2008).

Hypotheses

The authors have formulated the following research hypotheses:

1. Religiosity, authoritarian personality, political attitudes and agreement with the proportionality principle will positively correlate significantly with each other.
2. Religiosity, authoritarian personality, political attitudes, and agreement with the proportionality principle will significantly predict moral decisions.
3. Agreement with the proportionality principle will mediate the associations between the three independent variables

(religiosity, authoritarian personality, and political attitudes) and the dependent variable (moral decision).

Because of the fact that, to the best of our knowledge, the following two issues have not been studied before, the authors have posed them as open research questions: possible differences in solving the moral dilemma (a) between the three groups of participants, (b) among males and females from the student group.

Method

Participants

In the current study, participants came from three groups of young Israelis: the two groups of soldiers, including only men (women do not serve in combat infantry units in the IDF), and one student group, including both genders. The groups consisted of (a) 122 regular soldiers serving in infantry combat units (23% serve in commando units); (b) 120 active reserve soldiers (28% have served in commando units); and (c) 112 students (60% female and 40% male). Almost all soldiers from the two soldier groups have experienced search and arrest operations during their service. Due to the conscription law in Israel, it is not surprising that most of them (87%) served in the army; only 8% served in National Service, and 4.5% did not serve. All the students reported Jewish nationality (demographic details in Table 1). Data for 10 respondents from the three groups were rejected due to incomplete information (more than six items were missing): four regular soldiers, three reserve soldiers, and three students. Only 17 male students (22% of the males) reported serving in combat units. There was no effect whether the analyses were conducted with or without their data. The majority of the students (90%) were studying social sciences and humanities and were attending Tel Hai College (62%) or major universities in Israel (18%), and the remaining 20% came from other academic colleges in Israel. Tel Hai College offers academic and continuing education programs for approximately 4,500 students. The college offers undergraduate degrees in life sciences, social sciences, computer science, and the humanities, and five master's degree pro-

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Three Groups of Participants

Groups	Regular soldiers (n = 122)	Reserve soldiers (n = 120)	Students (n = 112; 60% female)
Age			
M	21.16	25.66	25.40
SD	2.66	6.98	3.30
Range	18–24	21–43	21–46
Family status (%)			
Single	92	74	70
Partner	4	11	20
Married	2	15	10
Country of birth (%)			
Israel	94	95	95
Other	6	5	5
Religiosity (%)			
Secular	46	80	79
Traditional	26	10	8
Religious	24	9	13
Orthodox	4	1	9
Family economic situation (1–5)			
M	3.26	3.39	3.50
SD	1.24	1.30	1.24
Rank during regular service (%)			
Officers	7.5	8	6.10
Non-commissioned officer	92.5	92	93.9

grams (see details in http://website.telhai.ac.il/en/).

Sampling and Process

Participants were selected using nonprobabilistic combination of known contacts and the snowball sampling technique (Handcock & Gile, 2011). All participants signed informed consent, and anonymity was guaranteed. The questionnaire was approved by the appropriate department's ethics committee. Participants were recruited as follows. For the student group, the questionnaire was posted on the Internet for 3 weeks using Qualtrics (2013) software. Research assistants published the questionnaire on the student web-net at Tel Hai College, asking students to fill out the questionnaire and providing instructions regarding how to complete it. Anyone who was a current student was eligible. The two soldiers groups were recruited by students. Every student taking two courses in psychology at Tel Hai College was asked to give questionnaires to two soldiers whom they felt they could approach (one questionnaire to a regular soldier and one to a reserve soldier serving in combat infantry units). This assignment was one of their academic tasks (the students who distributed the study questionnaires were instructed not to fill out questionnaires themselves). The students administered the questionnaires during the soldiers' weekend breaks in their homes. The students waited until each participant had completed filling out the questionnaire (which took about 10 to 15 min). On the front page of the questionnaire, the authors explained that the research was examining decision making under combat conditions. In order to ensure that students gave the questionnaire to soldiers who met the requirements, each student was instructed to submit a list of each of the soldiers who received questionnaires, including unit name, rank, and position, and was asked to return this list to the researcher with the filled out questionnaires.

Participants from all three groups filled out the same demographic characteristics (excluding gender, which was relevant only to the student group): age, family status, country of birth, religiosity, family economic situation, and rank during service (see Table 1 for demographic characteristics of all three groups of participants). Religiosity was measured in the current study by a single item: "How would you define yourself?" (on a scale from 1 to 4: 1 = *secular*, 2 = *traditional*, 3 = *religious*, 4 = *orthodox*). Economic situation was measured by a single item: "What is the income of your family, compared with the average family income in Israel" (on a scale from 1 to 5). Other demographic variables included age, gender (only for the student group), type of army service, and unit service in regular and reserve duty.

Instruments

Instruments used for this study were the same for all three groups of participants.

Proportionality principle. This tool was developed specifically for the current study, as the authors did not find a similar tool in the literature. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement (1 = *fully object* to 5 = *fully support*) with seven statements. The tool was developed in a few steps: First, the authors collected 10 possible statements regarding the proportionality principle that might be relevant to a moral dilemma in the war against terrorists. Second, the authors gave the 10 statements to four social psychologist content experts and four lawyers, and asked them to assess to what degree each statement was relevant to the proportionality principle regarding the war on terrorism. As a result, the authors made corrections and deleted three items. Third, the authors repeated the last step with an additional two lawyers and two content experts. At the end of this process and after merging similar items, the authors were left with seven items (two of them were in the opposite direction).

Correlations among the seven items indicated that they were positive (after items three and four were reversed), significant ($p < .01$), and medium sized (for scale items and correlations among items, see the Appendix). The reliability of the scale in the present study was $\alpha = .76$ and a general mean score was used: the higher the score, the more agreement there is with the proportionality principle. Distribution of the average score revealed a normal distribution ($M = 3.17$, $SD = .73$); the central tendency measures tended slightly toward more agreement with the proportionality principle

Authoritarian Personality scale. Following Canetti-Nisim (2004), authoritarian personality

was measured by the Hebrew short version of Altemeyer's (1988) scale, validated in Israel (Rubinstein, 2003). Participants were asked to rate their agreement with each of 21 statements (scale: 1 = *completely disagree* to 6 = *completely agree*). Six of the items were in the opposite direction. Example items included, "In today's situation in our country extreme measures are needed to put the troublemakers, criminals and perverts in their place" and "It is good that young people today enjoy the freedom to protest against things they do not like and do what they want." The reliability of the scale was $\alpha = .87$, and a general mean score was used: the higher the score, the higher the authoritarianism. Distribution of the average difficulty score revealed a normal distribution ($M = 3.17$, $SD = .73$).

Political attitudes. Based on Canetti, Halperin, Hobfoll, Shapira, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2009), participants were asked to rate their general political attitudes (1 = *extreme right* to 5 = *extreme left*), and then to rate their level of agreement (1 = *fully object* to 5 = *fully support*) with nine statements. Example statements included, "In order to achieve a comprehensive peace with the Palestinians we will have to accept a painful compromise including giving up parts of Judea and Samaria" and "A full peace with Syria will require yielding the Golan Heights." The reliability of the scale was $\alpha = .91$, and a general mean score was used: the higher the score, the more left-wing the political attitudes are. Distribution of the average political attitude score revealed a normal distribution ($M = 2.77$, $SD = .94$): 25% defined themselves as left, 26% defined themselves as center, and 49% as having right-wing political attitudes.

Scenario. The scenario presenting the moral dilemma used in this study is based on an earlier study (Kimhi, 2014). The scenario, to a great degree, resembled a realistic situation characterizing the war against terrorists in Israel. All participants received the same scenario described as follows:

> A military unit is sent out for night activity within enemy territory in order to capture a "most wanted terrorist" with "blood on his hands" or to hit or kill the terrorist if he resists being captured. Intelligence sources have reported that the wanted terrorist is hiding in a certain house. Upon arrival, heavy fire is opened from the house and at the same time the reconnaissance team reports that they have identified a few civilians, including women and children, at the windows, waving their hands. Under these conditions, the longer the unit stays on site, the higher the risk. Visibility is poor and the situation requires quick decisions as to how to react. The unit knows that reinforcement forces would take a long time before arriving at the targeted house. Assuming that you *personally are the unit commander*, please answer the following questions based only on your personal opinion. Please mark the answer to each question that best reflects your personal opinion.

Moral decisions. Moral decisions refer to the actual decisions participants had to make in order to solve the moral dilemma presented to them. The scale used in this study is based on an earlier version (Kimhi, 2014). The earlier version of the scale included seven items (four of the items dealt with an attack and three dealt with trying to use highly restricted fire). In the current study, the authors added five new items in order to have six items for attack and six for minimal use of force or even retreat.

After reading the scenario, every participant, assuming that he was the commander of the unit, was asked to choose his reactions (scale: 1 = *certainly not*, to 5 = *certainly yes*) regarding each of 12 possibilities. The tool was developed in a few steps. First, the authors collected a number of possible commands in such a situation, based on case descriptions published in the media. Second, the authors gave the questionnaire to four infantry officers in combat reserve and regular units for comments and corrections. Third, after some corrections, the authors repeated the last step with an additional six infantry sergeants and officers. At the end of this process and after merging similar items, we were left with 12 items. Six of the items dealt with an attack and six dealt with trying to use highly restricted fire in order to save the civilians in the house (these items were in reverse direction). Examples of attack items included, "to fire back efficiently with light weaponry to the house," "to ask attack helicopters for air support," "to use antitank missiles," and "to request the help of a bulldozer (ready nearby) to destroy the house completely with the people inside if the wanted man does not give up." Examples using highly restricted fire items included, "to fire back in order to surround the house and to stop immediately after that because of the risk of harming civilians and to open negotiation in order to extradite the wanted man," "to hold fire regardless of the risk and wait for clarification of the situation," "to

try to negotiate with the those in the house," and "to retreat without accomplishing the mission."

With respect to the student group, the authors first gave the questionnaire to five female students in order to examine possible misunderstandings of some items. Based on their feedback comments, the authors added a short explanatory note to three of the items (using antimissile rockets, using attack helicopters, and requesting tank fire assistance) as follows: "this action increases the risk of causing great damage to the house and harming the civilians inside."

Examining reliability of the scale for all 354 participants, one item dealing with retreat was excluded due to low correlation with the rest of the scale. The reliability of the 11-item scale in the present study was $\alpha = .786$ and a general mean score was used: the higher the score, the more use of fire. Distribution of the average score revealed normal distribution ($M = 3.07$, $SD = .69$); the central tendency measures tended slightly toward more use of fire.

Results

As a first step, the authors calculated a correlation matrix among the research variables for each of the three groups as well as for the whole sample (see Table 2). Looking further at Table 2 indicates the following: (a) The pattern of correlations in all three groups (regular, reserve soldiers, and students) is very similar, suggesting a uniform model of associations among research variables beyond the three groups; (b) There are significant correlations between the three independent variables among themselves: the more religious, the more authoritarian the personality, and the more right-wing political attitudes, and vice versa; (c) Agreement with the proportionality principle correlates significantly with the three independent variables: The more agreement with the proportionality principle, the less religiosity, the less authoritarian personality, and the more left-wing political attitudes; and (d) The three independent and the mediator variables correlate significantly with

Table 2
Pearson Correlations Among the Study Variables, Means, and Standard Deviations, and Alpha Reliability

Variables	Group	Independents 1	Independents 2	Independents 3	Mediator 4	Dependent 5
1. Religiosity (1 item)	Regular	—	.548***	−.493***	−.281**	.404***
	Reserve	—	.430***	−.481***	−.413***	.368***
	Students	—	.391***	−.558***	−.422***	.399***
	All	—	.506***	−.553***	−.378***	.403***
2. F-scale (21 items)	Regular		—	−.535***	−.134	.260**
	Reserve		—	−.627***	−.341***	.388***
	Students		—	−.619***	−.499***	.351***
	All		α = .870	−.653***	−.362***	.359***
3. Political attitudes (10 items)	Regular			—	.356***	−.299***
	Reserve			—	.424***	−.380***
	Students			—	.594***	−.508***
	All			α = .912	.481***	−.416***
4. Proportionality principle (7 items)	Regular				—	−.500***
	Reserve				—	−.648***
	Students				—	−.584***
	All				α = .764	−.588***
5. Moral decisions (11 items)						α = .789
		M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
	Regular	1.86 (.921)	3.62 (.617)	2.28 (.783)	3.04 (.685)	3.20 (.645)
	Reserve	1.31 (.671)	3.20 (.646)	2.94 (.870)	3.20 (.729)	3.01 (.761)
	Students	1.36 (.733)	2.98 (.729)	3.11 (.958)	3.30 (.757)	2.98 (.639)
	All	1.51 (.822)	3.27 (.712)	2.77 (.940)	3.18 (.729)	3.07 (.690)

Note. Regular soldiers, $n = 122$; Reserve soldiers, $n = 120$; Students, $n = 112$; All, $N = 354$.
** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

the dependent variable: The more religious, more authoritarian personality, more right-wing political attitudes, the less agreement with the proportionality principle, the higher use of force in the moral decisions, and vice versa. These results fully support our first hypothesis. Our second hypothesis proposed that agreement with the proportionality principle, religiosity, authoritarian personality, and political attitudes would significantly predict moral decisions. Results mainly support this hypothesis: All four independent variables correlated significantly with moral decisions in accordance with the hypothesis: a higher level of agreement with proportionality, a lower level of religiosity and authoritarian personality, and more left-wing political attitudes significantly predicted lower use of force in the examined moral dilemma, and vice versa.

To examine our third hypothesis, which indicated that agreement with the proportionality principle will mediate the associations between the three independent variables and the dependent variable (moral decisions), we used structural equation modeling (Arbuckle, 2009). The examined model (see Figure 1) includes (a) three observed variables as independent variables: religiosity, authoritarian personality, and political attitudes; (b) agreement with the proportionality principle as observed mediator variable; and (c) moral decisions as a latent dependent variable with two indicators: attack and retreat. The fit indices for this model proved to be good: $\chi^2 = 8.309$, $df = 3$, $p = .40$; normal fit index = .988; relative fit index = .938; comparative fit index = .992; p of close fit = .216; root mean square error of approximation = .071.

Examining Figure 1 indicates the following: (a) three paths were *not* significant ($p > .05$)—political to moral decisions, authoritarian to proportionality principle, and authoritarian to moral decisions, but all other paths are significant ($p < .01$); (b) religiosity had significant direct effect on moral decision; (c) participants with more right-wing political attitudes and higher religiosity agreed less with the proportionality principle; (d) the proportionality principle is the best predictor of moral decision—the more agreement with this principle means the less use of force; (e) the four predictors explain 84% of moral decision variance.

To assess the mediating effect of the proportionality principle, the authors conducted a bootstrapping analysis ($n = 2{,}000$) and calculated 95% confidence intervals for estimation of indirect effects (see Table 3). Bootstrapping is a nonparametric resampling procedure that generates an approximation of the sampling distribution from the available data set. The indirect effect of each independent variable was considered as significant if the 95% bootstrap confidence interval did not include a value of zero (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). We concluded that agreement with the proportionality principle mediated between political attitudes, religiosity, and moral decision. These results mainly support the third hypothesis on the role of the

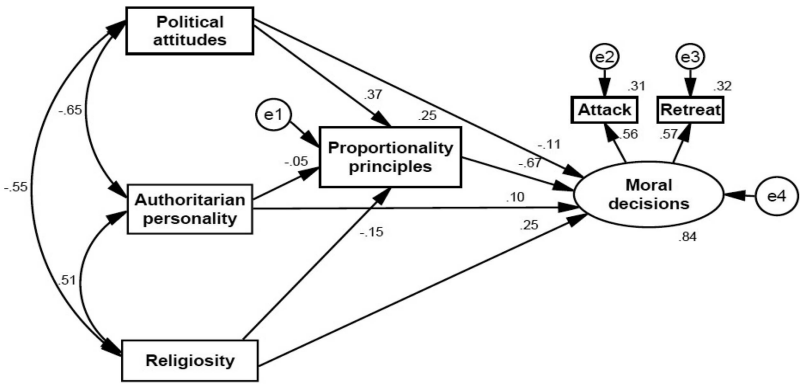

Figure 1. Structural equation model with standardized estimates, political attitudes, authoritarian personality, religiosity, and proportional principle. All paths ≥.15 are significant ($p < .01$).

Table 3
Standard and Bootstrap Estimates and CIs for Mediation Effect of Proportionality Principle

IV	DV	Effect (standardized)			Bootstrap 95% CI
		Direct	Indirect	Total	
Political attitudes	Moral decisions	−.109	−.244	−.354	−.354[a], −.152[a]
Authoritarian personality		.098	.031	.129	−.055, .122
Religiosity		.245	.102	.347	.028[a], .192[a]

Note. CI = confidence interval; DV = dependent variable; IV = independent variable.
[a] Numbers represent significant indirect effects ($p < .01$).

proportionality as a mediator between the dependent variables and moral decision.

Finally, the authors examined the two research questions: (a) possible differences on the research variable among the three groups of participants, and (b) gender differences in the student group. The authors used univariate analysis of variance to examine these questions. Results indicate the following (see Table 4): Regular soldiers reported a higher level of religiosity, higher authoritarianism, and more right-wing political attitudes compared with reserve soldiers and students. In addition, regular soldiers reported lower agreement with the proportionality principle and a higher level of use of force (moral decisions) compared with students. Overall, average moral decision ($M = 3.18$, $SD = .73$) in all three groups tended toward greater use of fire, which means more risk of harming civilians; regular soldiers reported somewhat higher use of force compared with students. However, all the above differences indicate small to very small size effects.

Additionally, the authors examined two possible differences within the student group. First, whether there were gender differences in the student group regarding the main research variables was examined. Results indicated only one difference: Female students reported a higher level of authoritarianism compared with male students ($p = .046$). No other significant differences were found between the two genders on religiosity, political attitudes, agreement with the proportionality principle, and moral decisions. Second, whether there were differences between the 12 students who did not serve in the army and the majority of students who served was examined. Results indicated only one difference: Those who did not serve reported a higher level of using force ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .82$) compared with those who served ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .59$; $t = 2.96$, $p = .004$).

Table 4
Univariate Analyses (ANOVA) Comparing Three Groups on Religiosity, Authoritarianism, Political Attitudes, Agreement With Proportionality Principle, and Moral Decisions

Variable	Regular	Reserve	Students	$F(3,430)$	η^2
Religiosity	$M = 1.86^a$	$M = 1.31^b$	$M = 1.36^b$	18.28***	.09
	$SD = .92$	$SD = .67$	$SD = .73$		
F-scale	$M = 3.62^a$	$M = 3.20^b$	$M = 2.99^b$	27.78***	.14
	$SD = .71$	$SD = .62$	$SD = .73$		
Political attitudes	$M = 2.28^a$	$M = 2.94^b$	$M = 3.11^b$	30.07***	.15
	$SD = .78$	$SD = .87$	$SD = .96$		
Proportionality principle	$M = 3.04^a$	$M = 3.20$	$M = 3.30^b$	3.86*	.02
	$SD = .68$	$SD = .73$	$SD = .68$		
Moral decisions	$M = 3.20^a$	$M = 3.01$	$M = 2.98^b$	3.62*	.02
	$SD = .64$	$SD = .76$	$SD = .64$		

Note. Superscript letters represent significant differences between groups using post hoc Scheffe analysis.
*$p < .05$. ***$p < .001$.

Discussion

The most prominent result of this study is the central role of agreement with the proportionality principle: Results indicated that this agreement is the best predictor of moral decisions. Moreover, results indicated that if a person does not agree with proportionality, he opts for more use of fire rather than highly restrictive fire. Even more significantly, if that person agrees with proportionality, he is inclined to use less fire, assuming that immediate capture of the terrorist is not so important that it justifies causing collateral damage. It is important to note that the four independent variables together explain a very large degree (84%) of moral decision variance, and proportionality alone explains about 50% of moral decision variance. In other words, the mere willingness to make proportionality considerations predicts a person's moral decision to a large extent, as presented in this study.

One way to explain the central role of agreement with the proportionality principle is the use of cognitive processes and how people make decisions. Borrowing from the field of stress research, it is possible to claim that the proportionality principle serves as a cognitive appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to this model, the impact of negative events reflects not only the level of exposure to the event but also individual perceptions of the stressful events (Dandoy & Goldstein, 1990; Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986), for example, cognitive appraisals mediated between gender and level of stress due to war experience (Kimhi, Eshel, Zysberg, & Hantman, 2009). Thus, it might be argued that the moral dilemma presented in our study posed a conflict and a stressful situation. Accordingly, level of agreement with the proportionality principle served as mediator between the three independent variables (religiosity, political attitudes, and authoritarian personality) and moral decision. This explanation needs further support in order to shed light on this important issue. Additionally, the results regarding agreement with the proportionality principle raise an important question: Would the proportionality principle be such an important predictor in resolving moral dilemmas in the war against terrorism among soldiers and civilians in other countries with different cultures? Because measuring agreement with the proportionality principle in the war against terrorism has been studied very little, more research is needed in order to support our suggested explanation.

Results indicated that participants' distribution of average moral decisions tended toward more use of fire, which also meant more risk of collateral damage. Recall that the principle of proportionality is part and parcel of current military ethics, and should be strictly observed by commanders and their troops. The extent to which subjects of this study do not adhere to it casts a significant shadow upon the assumption that under real circumstances they behave properly. These results corroborated our earlier study (Kimhi, 2014), which examined the same moral decisions among regular and reserve combat soldiers. Moreover, the current study indicated that there were no significant differences among the three groups of participants and no gender differences (in the student group) regarding moral decisions with respect to the amount of force to be used. In other words, all participants in this study, beyond group (regular, reserve, and students) and gender (male or female students) did not differ regarding the use of force in the presented dilemma.

One way to explain these results is to claim that the tendency of the respondents in this study toward the use of much firepower is affected by the long and difficult history of terror in Israel in the last 10 years (e.g., Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2012), and especially suicide terror (e.g., Kimhi & Even, 2004). Based on the above, the authors speculated that this background of terror attacks on Israeli citizens affected both soldiers and students. It may be suggested that the decisions of our respondents were based on intuitive thinking and were affected by this harsh background of terror attacks (Haidt, 2001; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2009; Valdesolo & Desteno, 2006). For example, after the latest Gaza War in 2014 (which took place after data collection of the current study), polls across Israel and Gaza found that both populations were more likely to support more militant parties and aggressive policies. In addition, a study has shown that posttraumatic stress disorder as a result of exposure to conflict increases threat perceptions and contributes to support for more militant policies (Canetti, Hirsch-Hoefler, & Eiran, 2014).

An additional line of explanation should also be pursued on theoretical and experimental levels. It is unknown whether participants of this study had a deep understanding of the proportionality principle and were proficient in applying it. One may assume that their attitude toward the proportionality principle manifested a general attitude toward the very idea of restricting fire or warfare methods in general during engagement with terrorists. Assuming the principle of proportionality was understood by the subjects of the study as a significant restriction, they did not use it for their practical considerations, but rather ignored it, or mentioned it as a source of possible support of their restrictive intuitive inclinations. More studies of the attitudes toward proportionality, including knowledge and understanding of the principle, as well as experience and proficiency in its application, are crucially required.

Results also indicated that three independent variables correlated significantly among themselves, and each of them with moral decisions: the higher level of religiosity, more right-wing political attitudes, and a more authoritarian personality more leads to use of force solving the moral dilemma. These results corroborate other studies indicating significant associations between religiosity, political attitudes, and authoritarian personality (e.g., Altemeyer, 1988, 1996; Canetti-Nisim et al., 2009; Feldman, 2003; Jost et al., 2003). However, the medium to high correlations found in our study (ranging from .50 to .60) suggested that these three variables do not represent one construct, but rather different aspects of a person, associated with each other. Based on our study, as well as others, it also may be claimed that all three represent a general a conservative worldview. Interestingly, when all three of them together predict moral decisions, an authoritarian personality was not significant, whereas political attitudes and religiosity predicted significantly and similarly moral decisions.

Limitations, Future Contribution, and Possible Conclusions

Like any research, the current study has its limitations. First, the sample in each of the three groups in this study is a convenience sample. There is a question as to the generalization of our results to the population of Israeli combat infantry soldiers, as well as soldiers from other armies (different cultures), those of different religions, and soldiers (and students) who were exposed much less to terrorism and war. Second, like some other studies examining moral dilemmas, the authors did not examine actual behavior, but rather soldiers' and students' reactions to a scenario that simulated a specific situation. Future studies should consider studying soldiers by using questionnaires and interviews a short time after completing a realistic task similar to that presented in this study in order to corroborate the present study results. Third, it is important to note that measuring agreement with the proportionality principle tool was developed specifically for this study and further validation is needed. Due to the many possible implications of agreement with the proportional principle in many war situations, it is important to develop and validate this scale so that it can be used to study different armies as well as various war situations. Fourth, the current study did not examine whether participants regarded the dilemma presented to them as involving a moral judgment. Future studies should examine to what degree participants perceived the presented scenario as a moral dilemma. Fifth, the current study is a correlational design study that indicates associations between research variables but does not allow causality conclusions. Further studies based on experimental designs using video game technology as the platform for the wargaming simulation are needed to support the current study results. Finally, future study can benefit from a pilot study examining which scenarios the participants consistently categorize as being of low, moderate, or high kinetic force.

Ideally, commanders make proportionality decisions based on professional knowledge and evaluation: They know what the mission they are expected to accomplish is. They act in consideration of the contribution of the accomplished mission to the end of the broader operation based on a professional evaluation of the expected collateral damage. Hence, ideally, agreement with the proportionality principle, as part of a commander's professional proficiency, should not correlate with religiosity, political views, or authoritarian personality. Consequently, further research should be carried out with professional commanders as subjects in

order to find out whether purely professional proportionality considerations are possible.

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(*Appendix follows*)

Appendix

Agreement With Proportional Principle Scale: Items and Interitem Correlations ($N = 354$)

Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. When a terrorist is hiding in uninvolved civilian homes, these civilians should be completely immune to military injury.	—	.224***	.336***	.471***	.292***	.437***	.138**
2. In every military action the guiding principle should be a compromise between the need to protect the citizens and the requirements of military necessity.		—	.245***	.199**	.177***	.243***	.336***
3. The need to accomplish the mission is more important than the need to avoid harming uninvolved civilians (revers).			—	.457***	.306***	.471***	.342***
4. The war on terror during which uninvolved civilians are used as human shields, justifies killing civilians as militarily needed (revers).				—	.403***	.387***	.337***
5. One should avoid injuring uninvolved civilians who are harboring terrorists as much as possible.					—	.221***	.293***
6. The need to avoid harming uninvolved civilians is more important than the need to accomplish the military mission.						—	.280***
7. All military action should maintain the principle of proportionality between the importance of the action and harming uninvolved civilians.							—
M	2.57	3.35	2.82	3.26	3.73	2.47	3.84
SD	1.06	1.16	1.13	1.17	1.15	1.09	1.05

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

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