RESEARCH ARTICLE

Living under threat: Mutual threat perception drives anti-Muslim and anti-Western hostility in the age of terrorism

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Abstract

This research demonstrates a common psychology of outgroup hostility driven by perceived intergroup threat among three groups and seven cultural contexts: non-Muslim Westerners, Muslims in Western societies, and Muslims in the Middle East. In Study 1, symbolic, but not realistic and terroristic threats, predicted non-Muslim Norwegians' intentions to join anti-Islamic movements. In Study 2, symbolic and realistic, but not terroristic threat, predicted non-Muslim Americans' willingness to persecute Muslims. In Studies 3 and 4, symbolic threat predicted support and behavioral intentions against the West among Swedish and Turkish Muslims. Finally, in Study 5, a comparison demonstrated that symbolic and realistic threats had the same effects on violent intentions among non-Muslim and Muslim Danes, and Muslims in Afghanistan. Meta-analysis showed that symbolic threat was most strongly associated with intergroup hostility. Across studies, participants with high religious group identification experienced higher levels of threat. Implications for intergroup research and prejudice reduction are discussed.

"The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive. Do we have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost? Do we have enough respect for our citizens to protect our borders? Do we have the desire and the courage to preserve our civilization in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it?"

> Donald Trump's speech during his official visit to Poland (Thrush & Davis, 2017).

> *"I'm at war with them not for personal reasons but because they* [the USA], *have murdered more than, so many children* [Iraqi children], *and they have oppressed my religion and they have oppressed people for no reason except that they say we believe in Allah"*

> Richard Reid, a British jihadist arrested for planning terror attack (CNN.com, 2003).

Intergroup relations between Muslim and non-Muslim populations have become increasingly hostile over the last two decades. Since the dramatic attacks of 9/11, Western countries have been the targets of dozens of deadly attacks, including the bombings and violent attacks in Madrid, London, Stockholm, Berlin, Paris, Nice, Manchester, Barcelona, San Bernardino and New York to name just a few. For their part, Western powers have also engaged in large-scale violence in Muslim-majority countries, including several wars, as well as drone strikes and assassination campaigns, cumulatively resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, the fate of whom is often relegated to the status of "collateral damage" (UNAMA, 2016).

The question of what motivates and rallies public support for such outgroup aggression cuts to the heart of the social sciences and social psychology. The archeological record indicates that humans evolved in a context of intergroup conflict that arguably could influence the evolution of social, group-beneficial behaviors insofar as solidary groups fared better in intergroup competition and conflict than did non-altruistic groups (Bowles, 2009; Brewer, 2007; Henrich, 2015; see also Richerson & Boyd, 2005). Religion and cultural ideology more broadly may help sustain solidarity and coordination in large-scale groups together with conformist learning bias and corresponding cultural conventionalism and punishment of norm deviance (Kessler & Cohrs, 2008; Norenzayan et al., 2016). This proposal is also supported by experimental evidence (e.g., Navarrete & Fessler, 2005; Navarrete, Kurzban, Fessler, & Kirkpatrick, 2004; Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008). This suggests that the evolved, universal human

psychology should respond violently not only when an out-group is seen to threaten the physical and material welfare of one's group, but also if it is seen to threaten the religious and cultural ideology that functions to sustain the solidary and coordination of one's own group.

Many right-wing politicians in Europe and the U.S. have used the recent refugee crisis and threat of terrorism by radical Islamic groups such as ISIS to argue that Islam and Muslims pose a general threat to Western culture, the welfare state and the economy (see Bloch, 2016; Mackey, 2015). Beyond economic threats and the effects of recent terror attacks, often associated with Muslims and Islam (Van de Vyver, Houston, Abrams, & Vasiljevic, 2016), Muslims are also portrayed as foreign invaders with values fundamentally different from those of Westerners (Carr, 2006; for recent similar views see Murray, 2017). Such perceptions of symbolic value threats were for instance highlighted in the recent ban of the Burkini (a full-body swimsuit worn by some Muslim women) in various French cities.

Importantly, this kind of threat rhetoric is not restricted to Western far-right political parties, but is often echoed in jihadist propaganda used by ISIS-, and Al-Qaeda-like movements. According to Al-Qaeda's pan-Islamic narrative, the West is waging a war against all Muslims and Islam (Lia, 2008; Roy, 2004) where, for instance, the various publications of satiric cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammad were portrayed as defamatory and derogatory Western insults and used for justifying violent retaliation. Further, in an effort to sustain their popularity and legitimacy among their followers, many Jihadist groups often point to Western foreign policy and military interventions in Muslim countries as a major source of threat to Muslims' well-being (CNN.com, 2003). Hence, perceptions of symbolic and realistic threats may fuel outgroup hostility in similar ways among Muslim and non-Muslims, as predicted by an account of the evolved functions of religion and culture. However, the vast majority of research on the effects of intergroup threats in the existing literature has been confined to Western cultural contexts.

Here, we systematically test whether similar psychological threat processes in fact relate to mutual outgroup hostility among non-Muslim Westerners (in Europe and the U.S.), Muslims living in the West (i.e., in Europe), and Muslims living in the Middle East (i.e., Turkey and Afghanistan), supporting the idea of a common psychology of outgroup hostility in response to perceived threats. We focus on two processes based on Stephan and Stephan's (1993, 1996a, 1996b) work on the role of threat for outgroup bias, symbolic and realistic threats.

Realistic Threat as Predictor of Attitudes Supporting Violence against Outgroups

Realistic threats typically arise from the perception of competition over scarce resources such as jobs, land, and political and economic power, as well as from threats to physical safety and the general well-being of the ingroup (i.e., Ashmore & Del Boca, 1976; Quillian, 1995). Their role in predicting outgroup bias is well established (Maddux, Galinsky, Cuddy, & Polifroni, 2008; Stephan et al., 2002; Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999). Indeed, a meta-analysis by Riek, Mania, and Gaertner (2006) found an average effect size of $r = .42$ between realistic threats and negative outgroup attitudes.

Existing research has commonly operationalized realistic threat as competition over scarce resources, while threats to the physical safety of the ingroup have received less attention. There is reason to believe that perceived terrorist threat constitutes a qualitatively distinct sub-category of realistic threat (i.e., Doosje, Zimmermann, Küpper, Zick, & Meertens, 2009), contributing to Westerners' hostility toward Muslims (i.e., Cottrell, Richards, & Nichols, 2010; Fischer, Greitemeyer, Kastenmüller, Frey, and Oßwald (2007); Oswald, 2005; Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004). For example, Uenal (2016) demonstrated that terroristic threat was theoretically and empirically distinct from more classical operationalizations of realistic threat. Hence, we tested whether realistic threat in its classic sense (i.e., as threat to resources) and in form of terrorist threat would uniquely predict anti-Muslim hostility among non-Muslim Westerners.

Also among Muslim groups, realistic threat in the form of perceptions of loss of economic and political opportunities or even loss of life due to the outgroup may play a role. Threats concerning scarce resources previously predicted violent intentions among Muslims in the West (i.e., Doosje, Loseman, & Van den Bos, 2013). In this paper, we focused on Western foreign policy as realistic threat to Muslims because it is regarded as one of the main causes of anti-Western resentment and terrorism among Muslims (i.e., Pape, 2003; Thomsen, Obaidi, Sheehy-Skeffington, Kteily, & Sidanius, 2014), but has received only modest empirical attention (see i.e., Obaidi, Bergh, Sidanius, & Thomsen, in press; Sidanius, Kteily, Levin, Pratto, & Obaidi, 2015). Pape (2005) analyzed all documented suicide attacks between 1980 and 2003, and concluded that they were primarily a consequence of foreign occupation, domination, and frustrated aspirations for autonomy (see also Obaidi et al., in press) – factors one could term counter-dominance motives (Thomsen et al., 2014). Similarly, a large-scale study by Mostafa and Al-Hamdi (2007) found strong support for a counter-dominance perspective in eight Arab countries (see also Tessler & Robbins, 2007). Moreover, Sidanius et al. (2015) found that support for 'resistance' violence and groups such as Hezbollah were driven by a counter-dominance motive among Lebanese Muslims and Christians (see also Levin, Kteily, Pratto, Sidanius, & Matthews, 2015; Levin, Pratto, Matthews, Sidanius, & Kteily, 2012; Sidanius, Henry, Pratto, & Levin, 2004). Against this background, we expected perceived realistic threat due to foreign policy and occupation to be associated with hostility toward Westerners among Muslims. In light

of recent research (Obaidi et al., in press), we expected this to be the case for Muslims living both in the West and the Middle East.

Symbolic Threat as Predictor of Attitudes Supporting Violence against Outgroups

Symbolic threats are perceived threats to a group's religious values, norms, morals, philosophy and identity (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), and have been associated with self-reported willingness to expel immigrants across 17 countries (McLaren, 2003) and outgroup violence (i.e., Bueno de Mesquita, 2007; see also Huntington, 1993; Lewis, 1990; Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008).

In the West, Islamic culture is in fact often framed as a symbolic threat (Kumar, 2012; Saeed, 2007). For instance, several leading European politicians have openly expressed concern about the number of Muslim refugees entering Europe, arguing that they pose a threat to Europe's Christian identity, values and norms (Mackey, 2015; see also Bansak, Hainmueller, & Hanggartner, 2016). Accordingly, we expected symbolic threat perceptions to be associated with Westerners' hostility to Islam and Muslims.

At the same time, we also predicted that the outgroup hostility of Muslims living both in Europe and the Middle East toward non-Muslims and the West would be similarly grounded in symbolic threats from perceived value incompatibility, public criticism of Islamic culture, and from assimilation pressures (Kunst & Sam, 2013; Kunst & Thomsen, 2015). Although the link between symbolic threat and support for violence among Muslims remains relatively understudied, there is some suggestive evidence that supports such a prediction. For example, Gallup polls in Muslim countries suggest that the notion of a fundamental clash between Islamic and Western civilizations has widespread support among Muslims (GallupPoll, 2002a, b). Documenting a link between such symbolic threat perceptions and violence, Bueno de Mesquita (2007) found that public support for terrorism in 14 Muslim countries was positively associated with the belief that the United States poses a threat to Islam (see also Fair & Shepherd, 2006). Also in the context of homegrown radicalization in Europe, perceived symbolic threat was found to reliably predict violent intentions among young Dutch Muslims (Doosje et al., 2013; see also van Bergen, Feddes, Doosje, & Pels, 2015). Even though Muslims in their respective countries are not the direct targets of anti-Muslim resentment as is the case for many Muslims living in the West, Muslims in Islamic counties are nevertheless well aware that they are often associated with fanaticism, fundamentalism, backwardness and intolerance in the Western popular imagination (The Guardian, 2005; see also Poole, 2002). Hence, we test whether the extent to which Muslims in Europe as well as in Afghanistan and Turkey feel that their cultural practices and values are threatened by the West is associated with more expressions of hostility toward Westerners and their societies.

The Potential Role of Religious Identification

Group identification is an important predictor of participation in collective action (e.g., van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Indeed, research suggests that ingroup identification is an important antecedent of perceived threat, often constituting a prerequisite for experiencing threats against the ingroup (Doosje et al., 2013; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Riek et al., 2006). For instance, various studies lend support for threats fully or partially mediating the effects of ingroup identification on intergroup bias (Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Stephan et al., 2002). Further, Riek et al. (2006) identified ingroup identification as antecedent to threat perceptions, proposing that high identifiers experience higher levels of intergroup threat than low identifiers and generally are more attentive to threats to the ingroup. For example, in their meta-analysis, they proposed a model in which the effect of ingroup identification on intergroup bias is mediated by threat perceptions. Hence, we expected individuals with strong ingroup identification to perceive the most threat, *mediating* the effect of social identity on increased outgroup hostility, in our current context of research.

However, salient social identity has also been found to *moderate* the effect of collective threat on outgroup hostility. For instance, in a small sample of 80 British women, perceived threat, reported aggression and support for retaliatory violence in response to a national threat (the London bombings) was strongest when national, rather than gender identity, was made salient. Conversely, the effect of gender threat (Taleban misogyny) was strongest when gender identify, rather than national identity, was salient (Fischer, Haslam, & Smith, 2010). Previous literature also suggests that identification strength moderates the relationship between threat and intergroup bias, indicating that only high identifiers are sufficiently motivated to react to group threats because the in-group is an important part of their identity (e.g., Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Riek et al., 2006). Therefore, in all studies we also tested if the relationship between perceived group threats and outgroup hostility is moderated by the strength of ingroup identification.

We focused on religious identity as opposed to ethnic or immigrant status (i.e., first, second or third generation) because both Muslim and non-Muslim identities have become highly salient markers for current group divides in Western and Middle Eastern societies (e.g., Roy, 2004). According to self-categorization theory (e.g., Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), peoples' thoughts, feelings and actions are largely dependent on which particular group membership is highlighted (salient) in a certain context or situation. Religion is playing an increasingly important role in the construction of identities in the contexts we investigated. For example,

many Western politicians refer to Judeo-Christian roots when defining Western identity (Hooper & Connolly, 2001). Moreover, much evidence indicates that young Western Muslims, to an increasing degree, perceive and define themselves in terms of their religious affiliation rather than their ethnicity and country of origin (i.e., Elliot & Chittenden, 2001; Roy, 2004; Saeed, Blain, & Forbes, 1999). This has also been shown to have downstream behavioral consequences (i.e., Phalet, Baysu, & Verkuyten, 2010). This is not to say that other forms of social identification than religious ones do not matter. In fact, ethnic identification predicted support for violence against the West in previous research (i.e., Sidanius et al., 2015). However, given the particular context of our research, in the current paper we chose to focus on religious identity.

The Present Research

That perceived threat plays an important role for intergroup bias—indeed, the fact that symbolic and realistic threats robustly contribute to negative intergroup attitudes— is a fundamental idea that is well-established and empirically supported in the literature (e.g., Sherif, 1961; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004; Stephan & Stephan, 1996a, 1996b). Yet, we believe that our work contributes importantly to our understanding of this basic phenomenon because we examine and compare how perceptions of different kinds of realistic and symbolic threats relate to out-group hostility across several cultural contexts. A review conducted by Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan (2010) concluded that research in the social sciences reflects very little of the full breadth of human diversity, typically focusing on a narrow and potentially peculiar subpopulation—people from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (i.e., WEIRD) societies. Indeed, this is also the case for research on the effects of threat perceptions, which mostly has been conducted among White Westerners (see Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). Thus, research using a diverse set of samples is crucially needed to establish empirically how culturally specific or universal the proposed threat mechanisms are.

To the best of our knowledge this is the first comparative study that explores whether similar threat perceptions predict outgroup hostility and violence across Muslims living in Europe and the Middle East as well as among non-Muslims in Europe and in the US. Such comparisons are important policy-wise. For instance, if different threats matter for non-Muslims as well as for Muslims depending on whether they are minorities in Denmark or the majority population in Muslim countries (see Bizman & Yinon, 2001) different strategies and interventions may be needed. Against this background, in five studies and seven populations we investigated the relative contributions of symbolic and realistic threats in a variety of contexts. Across all studies, we expected that symbolic and realistic threats would both contribute to outgroup hostility. We considered it an open empirical question as to which type of threat perceptions would be most strongly and consistently related to outgroup hostility across cultural contexts and indeed conducted the current set of studies in an attempt to begin answering it.

Study 1

In the first study, we tested whether perceived symbolic, classic realistic and terror threats to the ingroup predicted non-Muslim Westerners' willingness to support and join mass protests against Muslim immigration that were common in Europe at the time of data collection (i.e., the so called 'Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West' [PEGIDA]). We also tested whether religious (here, Christian) identity would be associated with higher realistic, terror and symbolic threat perceptions in the first place and thereby indirectly be related to higher intentions of joining such protests.

Method

Participants and procedure. A total of 205 non-Muslim Norwegian participants (M_{age} = 30.26, SD_{age} = 12.11; 56.6% females) were recruited through snowball sampling on Facebook. Two percent of the participants reported to have completed primary school, 32.7% secondary school, 44.9% had a bachelor's degree, and 20.5% a master's degree. A slight majority of participants planned to vote for the conservative coalition (59.5%) and 40.5% for the liberal coalition.

Measures. For this and all remaining studies, an overview of the measures and their items can be found in the supplementary online materials (SOM).

Religious group identification. Three items (e.g., "How strongly do you identify with other people of your religious group?") from Thomsen et al. (2008) were used to measure participants' religious group identity (α = .92). Responses were rated on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*very weakly/not close at all/never*, depending on item) to 7 (*very strongly/very close/very often*, depending on item).

Realistic, terror and symbolic threats. Based on a measure from González, Verkuyten, Weesie, and Poppe (2008), we measured symbolic threat with three items (e.g., "Muslims are a threat to the Norwegian culture"; α = .93) and realistic threat with three items (e.g., "Because of the presence of Muslims, unemployment in Norway will increase"; α = .72). Moreover, we measured terror threat with two items (e.g., "The Islamic State is an extreme threat to Norway"; r = .71, $p < .001$). All items were rated on 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*totally disagree)* to 7 (*totally agree*). The

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and variable intercorrelations in Study 1

Variables	*M*	*SD*	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Religious Identification	3.36	1.82	.04	.19**	.17*	.15*
2. Perceived Realistic Threat	1.80	.95	-	.20**	.49***	.20**
3. Perceived Terror Threat	4.66	1.54		-	.36***	.19**
4. Perceived Symbolic Threat	2.42	1.46			-	.34***
5. PEGIDA Support	1.95	1.43				-

*$p < .05$,
**$p < .01$,
***$p < .001$

three threats loaded on different factors (see SOM for factor analysis).

Support for PEGIDA-like movements. Using the same scale format, participants indicated their agreement with six items (α = .96) denoting different degrees of behavioral support for a PEGIDA movement rally. These items varied in the degree of involvement from milder forms of support (e.g., "I would be positive toward a march against the Islamization of Norway") to stronger forms (e.g., "I would organize a march against the Islamization of Norway").

Results

Religious group identity was positively related to support for PEGIDA-like movements, and to symbolic and terror threat but not to realistic threat (see Table 1). However all three types of threats were related, in zero-order terms, to more support of PEGIDA-like movements.

We first examined a SEM model, in which realistic, terror and symbolic threats mediated the link between religious group identity and support for PEGIDA-like movements. In this and all remaining studies, the models were estimated using Mplus and Robust Maximum Likelihood (MLR) estimation.[1] The resulting model fitted the data well, χ^2 (4) = 6.55, p = .162, χ^2/df = 1.64, *CFI* = .98, *RMSEA* = .06, 90% CI [.00, .13], *SRMR* = .03.[2] The results of the path analysis showed that only symbolic threat was uniquely associated with support for PEGIDA-like movements (see Table 2). Still, although only the direct effect of symbolic threat was significant, constraining the direct paths from symbolic and realistic threats (Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(1)$ = 2.39, p = .122) and the paths from symbolic and terror threats (Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(1)$ = 2.97, p = .084) on PEGIDA support to equality produced no significant deterioration in model fit, suggesting that, in this study, the difference between the direct effects of the threats were not statistically significant.

Based on bootstrapping with 5000 random re-samples,[3] religious group identity had an indirect positive effect on support for PEGIDA-like movements via symbolic but not realistic or terror threat (see Table 2). The indirect effect via symbolic threat differed significantly from that through realistic threat (ΔB = .04, 95% CI [.01, .10]), but not from that through terror threat (ΔB = .03, 95% CI [−.01, .09]).

To test whether these findings were robust to the introduction of demographic variables, we ran the same model controlling for the effects of age, gender, political party preference and education. Again, only symbolic threat predicted support for PEGIDA-like movements (β = .25, p = .005), and only the indirect effect through symbolic threat was significant (B = .03, 95% CI [.01, .08]).

No empirical support was found for an alternative model where religious identification moderated the effects of perceived threats on PEGIDA support (realistic threat: β = −.07, p = .353; symbolic threat: β = −.00, p = .989; terror threat: β = .13, p = .088).

Study 2

Study 1 provided preliminary evidence that symbolic threat was associated with outgroup hostility toward Muslims among ethnic Norwegians. In Study 2, we focused on the extent to which symbolic, realistic and terror threats would be associated with Americans' self-reported willingness to take part in state-sponsored, violent persecution of Muslims. As in the previous study, we also tested here whether religious group identification would be associated with higher levels of symbolic, realistic and terror threats in the first place.

Method

Participants and procedure. A total of 205 non-Muslim Americans (M_{age} = 34.77, SD_{age} = 11.09; 45.4% females) were recruited through Amazon MTurk. One participant identified as Muslim and was excluded from further analysis. Of the total sample,

[1]Throughout all analyses in this paper, we used the robust maximum likelihood estimator in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) to account for missing data (< 3%) and skewed distributions.

[2]The procedure also included a video manipulation, in which participants either watched a video portraying a Norwegian Islamist or a control video. Because the manipulation had no significant effect, we do not treat it as predictor in subsequent analyses but control for it as covariate.

[3]To test the indirect effects in all studies we used bootstrapping with 5000 random re-samples.

Table 2. Standardized direct and unstandardized indirect effects for each study

Study	Sample	*N*	Dependent Variable	Direct Effects of Threats by			Indirect Effects of Religious Identity Mediated by		
				Realistic	Symbolic	Terror	Realistic	Symbolic	Terror
Majority Members in the West									
1	Ethnic Norwegians	205	Support Pegida	.04	.29***	.08	.01 [−.004, .02]	.04 [.01, .10]	.01 [−.01, .04]
2	Americans	205	Muslim Persecution	.46***	.29***	.06	.15 [.07, .23]	.09 [.02, .16]	.01 [−.01, .03]
5	Ethnic Danes	112	Violent Intentions	.21***	.47***	–	.11 [.05, .16]	.16 [.10, .21]	–
Muslim Minority Members in the West									
3	Swedish Muslims	161	Anti-Western Violence	.15†	.34***	–	.05 [−.01, .11]	.10 [.02, .17]	–
5	Danish Muslims	142	Violent Intentions	.32***	.49***	–	.11 [.05, .16]	.16 [.10, .21]	–
Muslims Outside the West									
4	Muslim Turks	247	Violent Intentions	−.04	.33***	–	−.02 [−.08 .05]	.15 [.07, .23]	–
5	Muslim Afghans	155	Violent Intentions	.30***	.41***	–	.04 [−.009, .08]	.16 [.10, .21]	–

Notes: All standardized indirect effects were tested using bootstrapping with 5000 random re-samples.
*$p < .05$,
**$p < .01$,
***$p < .001$.
†$p = .07$.

77.1% were Caucasian, 9.3% African American, 7.8% Asian, 3.9% Hispanic, and 0.5% Native American.

Measures

Religious group identification. To measure religious group identity we used the same items and scale format as in Study 1 (α = .96).

Realistic threat. Realistic threat was measured with seven items (α = .97). Participants rated from 1 (*not at all threatened*) to 7 (*threatened to a high degree*) the degree to which they felt that the US labor market, welfare system, economic wealth of US citizens, and the US economy in general were threatened by Muslims.

Symbolic threat. To measure symbolic threat, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they felt that different aspects of the US culture were threatened by Muslims. These aspects were US cultural habits, values and norms, cultural traditions and American culture in general (α = .98). Responses were scored from 1 (*not at all threatened*) to 7 (*threatened to a high degree*).

Terror threat. Terror threat was measured by three items (e.g., "How likely do you think Americans would be a target of terrorism in the future?", α = .74) on a scale ranging from 1 *not likely at all* to 7 *very likely*.

Willingness to support Muslim persecution. We adapted Altemeyer's (1996) posse measure, following Thomsen et al. (2008), to capture Muslim outgroup persecution (e.g., "I would participate in attacks on the Islamic cultural headquarters organized by the proper authorities"; α = .96), which was measured by six items rated from 1 *strongly disagree* to 7 *strongly agree*.

Results

Variable descriptives and intercorrelations can be found in Table 3.

As in Study 1, we estimated a model that tested whether perceptions of realistic, terror and symbolic threats mediated the effect of religious group identification on support for outgroup persecution. All paths were significant except the direct paths from religious group identification on support for persecution, and terror threat on support for persecution. The trimmed model excluding these paths fitted the empirical data well, χ^2 (1) = .537, p = .46, *CFI* = 1, *RMSEA* = .00, 90% CI [.00, .17], *SRMR* = .001. The results of the path analysis showed that both symbolic and realistic threats, but not terror threat, were associated with willingness to take part in and support violent persecution of Muslims (see Table 2). The direct effect of realistic threat was stronger (β = 0.45, [0.25, 0.64]) compared to symbolic threat (β = 0.29, [0.09, 0.49]). However, when constraining the direct paths from symbolic and realistic threats on support for persecution, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 1.029$, p = .31, and symbolic and terror threats

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and variable intercorrelations in Study 2

Variables	*M*	*SD*	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Religious Identification	3.42	1.97	37**	.25**	.35**	.32**
2. Perceived Realistic Threat	2.84	1.90	-	.44**	.82**	.72**
3. Perceived Terror Threat	5.16	1.46		-	.44**	.39**
4. Perceived Symbolic Threat	3.26	2.10			-	.69**
5. Muslim Persecution	2.61	1.78				-

*$p < .05$,
**$p < .01$.

on support for persecution, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 2.57$, $p = .10$, these produced no significant deterioration in model fit, indicating that the paths were not statistically different. On the other hand, when constraining the direct path from terror and realistic threat to persecution resulted in significant deterioration in the model fit, indicating that the paths were statistically different Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 6.90$, $p < .001$,

Religious group identification had no direct effect on support for violent persecution of Muslims, but it had indirect positive effects via each of symbolic and realistic threats, but not terror threat (see Table 2). The indirect effect via symbolic threat did not differ significantly from that via realistic threat ($\Delta B = -.07$, 95% CI [−.08, .28]) and terror threat ($\Delta B = .03$, 95% CI [−.05,-.09]).

Finally, we ran additional analysis to test whether the above relations were robust to the introduction of the demographic variables that were available, namely, age, gender and ethnicity. All paths that were significant without these control variables remained strong in this analysis ($\beta s \geq .24$, $ps \leq .001$).

We found no empirical support for an alternative model where religious identification instead moderated the effects of perceived threats on outgroup hostility (realistic threat: $\beta = .11$, $p = .437$; symbolic threat: $\beta = .09$, $p = .275$; terror threat: $\beta = -.21$, $p = .126$).

In sum, in Study 1 only symbolic threat was related to Norwegians' intentions to support anti-Islamic movements. However, in Study 2 conducted in the US among majority populations both symbolic and realistic threats explained outgroup hostility. In both studies, terror threat did not explain outgroup hostility.

Study 3

Moving to the Muslim minority perspective, we examined whether similar processes to those observed in the first two studies among non-Muslims also could be related to hostile outgroup attitudes among Muslim minority groups in Europe. Specifically, we tested whether symbolic and realistic threat perceptions among Muslim residents of Sweden would explain support of anti-Western violence.

Moreover, we were interested in examining whether participants' personal experiences with Western foreign policy might moderate the predictive power of symbolic and realistic threats. If symbolic threat was strongly associated with outgroup hostility, not only among native-born Muslims (i.e., Muslims born and raised in the West), but even among foreign-born Muslims (i.e., Muslims born abroad) who personally have been exposed to the realistic threats of Western foreign policy (i.e., war, Western-led military interventions/occupation/drone attacks and foreign policies), then this would be compelling evidence that symbolic threat is particularly influential for the support of anti-Western violence among Muslims (see also Obaidi et al., in press).[4]

Method

Participants and procedure. From a pool of ten randomly selected Swedish Islam-related Facebook websites, we randomly sampled 151 Muslim respondents (57.4% women). Most participants were in the 18–34 age range (86%). Of the total sample, 86 indicated that they had personally experienced Western foreign policy. All participants identified as either first (64.7%) second (31.6%) or third (0.8%) generation Muslim immigrants to Sweden. Moreover, 0.7% identified as being upper class, 9.7% as being upper middle class, 58.2.1% as being middle class, 14.2% as being lower middle class and 17.2% as being working class. Of the total sample, 26.1% had completed high school, 46.3% were enrolled in university studies, 15.7% had earned a university degree and 4.5% had a post-graduate degree.

Measures. Except for the measure of personal experience of Western foreign policy (details provided

[4]Logically, one might assume that individuals who have personally experienced the costs of Western military intervention and policy might experience more realistic threat than those who do not have such personal experiences. However, in line with intergroup emotions theory (Smith, 1993) and recent empirical findings (Obaidi et al., in press), we proposed that Muslims living in the West may still experience realistic threat by proxy without having personally experienced the steel's edge of Western foreign policy and military interventions. In other words, we argue that being aware that members of their group suffer abroad, European-born Muslims may experience realistic threat on their behalf and react accordingly (Obaidi et al., in press), such that the general pattern of psychological reactions among Muslims in the Middle East and Muslims in the West may not differ.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and variable intercorrelations in Study 3

Variables	*M*	*SD*	2.	3.	4.
1. Religious Identification	4.76	1.81	48**	.47**	.27**
2. Perceived Realistic Threat	4.72	1.65	-	.48**	.35**
3. Perceived Symbolic Threat	3.62	1.59		-	.48**
4. Anti-Western Violence	3.03	1.77			-

*$p < .05$,
**$p < .01$.

below), all items were scored on 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Religious group identification. Four items measured Muslim identification (e.g., "I feel strongly connected to other Muslims"; α = .96).

Symbolic threat. Symbolic threat was assessed using three items (e.g., "Non-Muslim Westerners hold values that conflict with the values of people like me"; α = .83).

Realistic threat. Four items (e.g., "Western foreign policies pose a threat to Muslims' wellbeing"; α = .95) assessed realistic threat.

Support for anti-Western violence. Support for anti-western violence was assessed using five items (e.g., "To what extent is it understandable that some young Europeans with a migrant background might have wanted to commit acts of terrorism in Europe?"; α = .88) adopted from Tausch et al. (2011).

Direct experience of Western foreign policy. To measure the direct experience of Western foreign policy we asked our participants the following question. "Have you personally experienced Western military interventions (i.e., occupation or war in a Muslim country?"), which they could answer with "yes" or "no".

Results

Variable descriptives and correlations can be found in Table 4.

First, consistent with our theorizing, we examined a similar path model as in the previous two studies. All paths were significant except the direct path from religious group identification to support for anti-Western violence. The trimmed model excluding this path fitted the empirical data well, χ^2 (1) = 0.024, p = .88, *CFI* = 1, *RMSEA* = .00, 90% CI [.00, .11], *SRMR* = .00. Symbolic threat had a significant effect on support for anti-Western violence. In contrast, the effect of realistic threat on anti-Western violence was only marginally significant (see Table 2). At the same time, constraining these parameters to equality did not indicate significant model deterioration, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 1.76$, p = .18, indicating that the paths were not statistically different. Bootstrapping showed that Muslim identification had a significant indirect effect via symbolic threat, but not via realistic threat (see Table 2), yet these indirect effects did not differ significantly in strength (ΔB = .04, 95% CI [−.13, .04]).[5]

Further, we ran an additional analysis to test whether the above relations were robust to the introduction of demographic variables for age, gender, education, socio-economic and immigrant status (i.e., first, second and third generation). All paths that were significant without these control variables remained as strong in this analysis ($\beta s \geq 0.17$, $ps \leq .04$).

We found no empirical support for an alternative model where religious identification instead moderated the effects of perceived threats on outgroup hostility (realistic: $\beta = -.00$, p = .991; symbolic: β = .16, p = .087).

Study 4

In Study 4, we switched to a Middle Eastern context. Specifically, we focused on Turkey, a particularly interesting context for various reasons. First, despite the fact that the country over the past century has defined itself as a modern, secular, and Western-oriented nation-state, an Islamic revival has recently taken place in many parts of the country. Indeed, the ruling party headed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (i.e., the Justice and Development Party, or AKP) is an Islamic party. Under Erdogan, the country has adopted a more antagonistic stance toward the West (particularly as its efforts at entering the E.U. have stalled) and has been accused of unofficially supporting radical Islamist

[5]To compare Muslims with personal experience of Western foreign policy to those without such experience, we conducted a multi-group path analysis to see whether the model proposed in the above studies applied equally to those with and without direct personal experience of Western foreign policy. In the first step of the analysis, we ran a baseline model in which we allowed all relations between the variables to vary between the two groups. This model fit the data well, $\chi^2(2) = 1.23$, p = .54 *CFI* = 1.00, *RMSEA* = .00, 90% CI [.00, .21], *SRMR* = .02. In the second step we tested a model in which all relations between the variables were constrained to equality across both groups, which also provided good fit, χ^2 (7) = 2.97, p = .88, *CFI* = 1.00, *RMSEA* = .00, 90% CI [.00, .07], *SRMR* = .03. The difference between these models was non-significant, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 1.89$, p = .863, indicating no difference between Muslims with or without personal experience of Western foreign policy: in both groups, both threat forms were related to support for anti-Western violence. These results are in line with recent findings among comparable populations showing that personal experiences are not necessary for a group to feel victimized and as a result engage in collective action on the behalf of the ingroup (Obaidi et al., in press).

groups in Syria such as Ahrar al-Sham (Gagaptay, 2016). Also, according to a report by the Soufan Group, more than 2100 Turkish citizens have joined ISIS, making Turkey the fourth-largest contributor of foreign fighters to ISIS (The Soufan Group, 2015). It is reasonable to assume that based on these developments, the intergroup relations between the West and Turkey are becoming increasingly hostile, resulting in increasing threat perceptions particularly among members of the Islamic government.

Method

Participants and procedure. We sampled 247 Turkish respondents (70.4% women) in Turkey through snowball sampling. Most participants were in the 18–30 age range (89.1%). We aimed to include a diverse sample focusing not only on Islamic organizations but also student samples and online social media with an aim of including both people with secular and moderate religious views, but also people with strong religious beliefs. First, we approached members of non-governmental organizations, and Islamic groups (31 people) in person and invited them to take part in the study. Then, using the snowball method, they were asked to share the contacts of people who they thought might be interested in participating in the study. In addition to approaching people in person individually, we used email listservs, and online social media sources including Twitter and Facebook to recruit potential participants. Five participants did not identify as Muslims and were excluded from the subsequent analysis. Of the total sample, 1.2% had completed the primary school, 26.9% had completed high school, 12.4% had earned a university degree, 54.1% were enrolled in university studies, and 2.5% had a post-graduate degree. Moreover, 3.3% identified as being upper class, 40.9% as being upper middle class, 48.3.1% as being middle class, 3.7% as being lower middle class and 1.2% as being working class.

Measures. All items were answered on 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Religious group identification. To measure religious group identification, we used the same items from Study 3, with the exception of item 4, which was reversed coded in this study (α = .86).

Symbolic threat. To measure symbolic threat we used four items (e.g., "Non-Muslim westerners hold values that conflict with the values of people like me"; α = .83).

Realistic threat. We assessed realistic threat using three items (e.g., "I think Muslims are disadvantaged because the West oppresses them"; α = .85).

Violent behavioral intentions. Violent behavioral intentions was measured using seven items (e.g., "I will personally use violence against people harming other Muslims that I care about"; α = .88) adopted from Obaidi, Bergh, and Akrami (unpublished data).

Results

Variable descriptives and intercorrelations can be found in Table 5.

Similar to the previous studies, we examined a path model in which realistic and symbolic threat perceptions mediated the effects of religious group identification on violent behavioral intentions. We first estimated the fully-saturated model, and then trimmed a non-significant path between realistic threat and violent behavioral intentions. The trimmed model fitted the empirical data well, $\chi^2(1) = .279$, $p = .60$, *CFI* = 1, *RMSEA* = .00, 90% CI [0.00, 0.14], *SRMR* = .00. Symbolic threat had a strong significant direct effect on violent behavioral intentions (see Table 2). Muslim identification also had a direct effect on violent behavioral intentions. Bootstrapping showed that Muslim identification also had a significant indirect effect through symbolic threat but not realistic threat (see Table 2).

Further, we ran an additional analysis to test whether the above relations were robust to the introduction of demographic variables for age, gender, education and socio-economic status. All paths that were significant without these control variables remained significant in this analysis ($\beta s \geq 0.17$, $ps \leq .05$).

We found no empirical support for an alternative model where religious identification instead moderated the effects of perceived threats on outgroup (realistic: $\beta = -.06$, $p = .381$; symbolic: $\beta = -.03$, $p = .680$).

Study 5

In different studies, we have demonstrated that symbolic and realistic threats are associated with out-group

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and variable intercorrelations in Study 4

Variables	*M*	*SD*	2.	3.	4.
1. Religious Identification	4.79	1.68	45**	.51**	.36**
2. Perceived Realistic Threat	4.16	1.74	-	.55**	.23**
3. Perceived Symbolic Threat	3.29	1.52		-	.41**
4. Violent Intentions	2.86	1.49			-

*$p < .05$,
**$p < .01$.

hostility among Western Europeans (i.e., Norwegians in Study 1) and US Americans (Study 2), (minority) Muslims residing in a majority non-Muslim European country (i.e., Muslims in Sweden in Study 3), and Muslims in a Muslim-majority country (i.e., Turkey). In all these studies, we used measures that were adapted to fit the specific contexts (i.e., emic measures), which has the benefit of ensuring that the items are as culturally relevant as possible. As a consequence, however, we were unable to directly compare the predictive utility of both realistic and symbolic threats across these groups. Hence, we sought direct support for the predicted common psychology of threat across culture in a final study that uses the exact same measures across various contexts (Denmark and Afghanistan) and groups (Muslims and non-Muslims in Denmark, and Afghans in Afghanistan).

Method

Participants and procedures

Muslims in Denmark. We followed the same data collection procedure as in Study 3, and sampled 142 Muslims living in Denmark (M_{age} = 26.7 years, SD_{age} = 11.2, 57.1% female). All participants identified as Muslims. Of the total sample, 2.9% identified as being upper class, 10.2% as being upper middle class, 67.9% as being middle class, 3.7% as being lower middle class and 1.2% as being working class. Moreover, 18.7 were high school students, 7.2% had completed high school, 33.1% were enrolled in university studies, 19.4% had earned an undergraduate degree and 11.5% had a post-graduate degree.

Non-Muslim Danes. A total of 112 non-Muslims (M_{age} = 28.67 years, SD_{age} = 11.5, 48.2% female) were recruited through postings on online social networks (i.e., Facebook groups unrelated to the topic) for a study on "social issues". Of the total sample, 8% identified as being upper class, 18.8% as being upper middle class, 47.3% as being middle class, 19.3% as being lower middle class and 6.3% as being working class. Moreover, 11.9% were high school students, 10% had completed high school, 30.3% were enrolled in university studies, 33% had earned an undergraduate degree, and 13.8% had a post-graduate degree.

Muslims in Afghanistan. In total, 155 Muslims living in Afghanistan (M_{age} = 23 years, SD_{age} = 7.14: 49% female) were recruited through online snowball sampling and research assistants who approached participants individually in various neighborhoods in Kabul. All participants identified as Muslims. Of the total sample, 7.3% identified as being upper class, 6% as being upper middle class, 18% as being middle class, 49% as being lower middle class and 19.3% as being working class. Moreover, 6% were high school students, 71.3% had completed high school, 12% were enrolled in university studies, 6.7% had earned an undergraduate degree, and 3.3% had a post-graduate degree.

Measures. All items were answered on 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The survey was administered in the local languages (i.e., in Danish in Denmark and in Dari in Afghanistan).

Muslim and Christian Group identification. To measure religious group identification we used three items adopted from Doosje, Ellemers and Spears (1995; e.g., "I strongly identify with other Muslims/Christians"; Danish Muslims: α = .85; non-Muslim Danes: α = .70; Afghan Muslims: α = .92).

Symbolic threat. To measure symbolic threat, we used three items adopted from González et al. (2008; e.g., "Muslims'/Westerners' norms and values are being threatened by Westerners/Muslims"; Danish Muslims: α = .93; non-Muslim Danes: α = .77; Afghan Muslims: α = .93).

Realistic threat. We assessed realistic threat with three items adopted from González et al. (2008; e.g., "Because of Muslims/Westerners, Westerners/Muslims have fewer resources"; Danish Muslims: α = .90; non-Muslim Danes: α = .90; Afghan Muslims: α = .85).

Violent behavioral intentions. We used same items from Study 4 to measure violent behavioral intentions (Danish Muslims: α = .94; non-Muslim Danes: α = .95; Afghan Muslims: α = .94; see Obaidi et al., unpublished data).

Results

Variable descriptives and intercorrelations can be found in Table 6.

We ran multi-group path analyses to test the extent to which the model tested in Studies 3 and 4 could be constrained to equivalence across the present samples. We began with the same fully-saturated model we examined in previous studies (e.g., Studies 3 and 4), in which religious group identity had a direct effect on violent behavioral intentions and indirect effects going through each of realistic and symbolic threat. Realistic and symbolic threats were assumed to covary in the model (as in the previous studies). The estimated unconstrained and unstandardized model is displayed in Figure 1.

Next, we constrained individual paths to equality and tested whether this resulted in significant deterioration of model fit. We found no significant deterioration of model fit when constraining the effects from symbolic threat on behavioral intentions across all groups, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 4.66$, $p = .098$; when constraining the effects from realistic threat on behavioral intentions, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = .71$, $p = .70$; or when constraining the effects from religious group identity to symbolic threat, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 1.22$, $p = .54$. Moreover, constraining the correlation between the threat measures did not deteriorate model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 1.31$, $p = .52$. This suggests that all

Table 6. Descriptive statistics and variable intercorrelations for Study 5

Variables	*M*	*SD*	2.	3.	4.
Muslims (Denmark)					
1. Religious Identification	3.90	1.75	.40**	.43**	.29**
2. Perceived Realistic Threat	3.58	1.81		.41**	.51**
3. Perceived Symbolic Threat	3.75	1.73			.59**
4. Violent Intentions	3.59	1.49			-
Non-Muslims (Denmark)					
1. Religious Identification	3.17	1.28	.44**	.27**	.16
2. Perceived Realistic Threat	2.54	1.12	-	.34**	.37**
3. Perceived Symbolic Threat	3.84	1.61		-	.39**
4. Violent Intentions	3.46	1.39			-
Muslims (Afghanistan)					
1. Religious Identification	4.54	1.29	.30**	.37**	.40**
2. Perceived Realistic Threat	3.65	1.31	-	.29**	.35**
3. Perceived Symbolic Threat	3.87	1.12		-	.65**
4. Violent Intentions	3.69	1.22			-

*$p < .05$,
**$p < .01$.

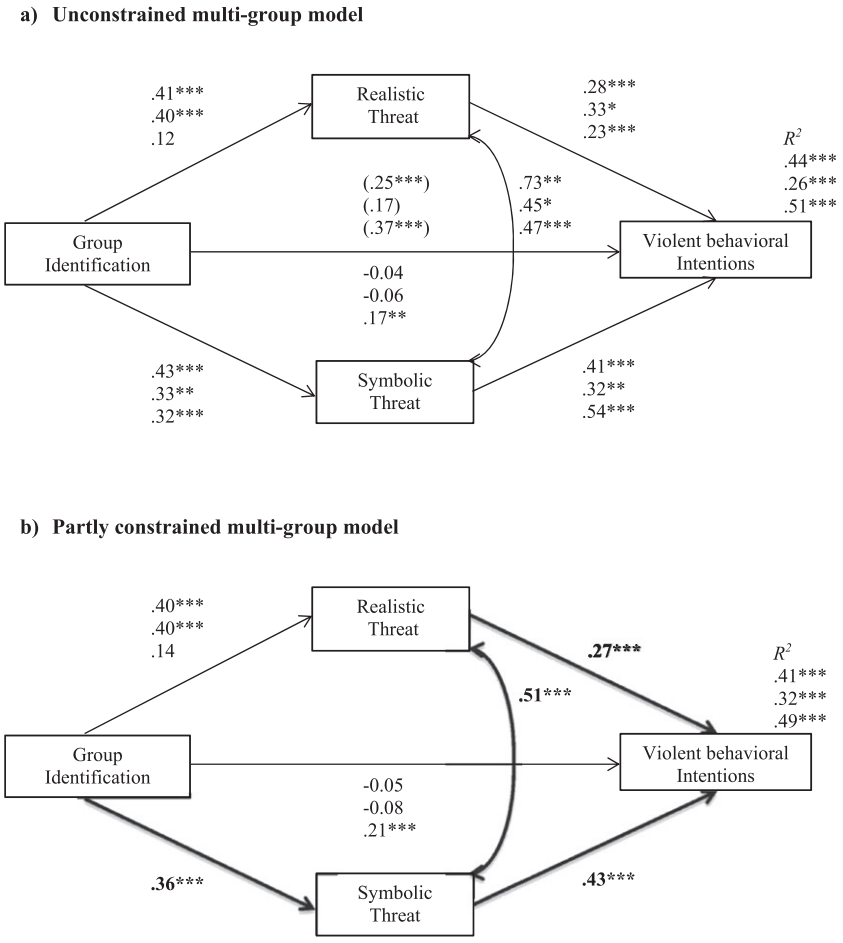

Fig. 1: Structural equation model predicting violent behavioral intentions among Muslims in Denmark (first value), non-Muslims in Denmark (second value) and Muslims in Afghanistan (third value) as a function of religious identification, symbolic and realistic threats. Paths (and estimates) displayed in bold were set to equality without significant deterioration of model fit. Unstandardized coefficients are displayed. Coefficients in parentheses are based on the unmediated model*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

of these paths were statistically indistinguishable from one another across these three different groups.

In contrast, constraining the effect from religious group identity on behavioral intentions, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 7.88$, $p = .020$, and from religious group identity on realistic threat, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 8.27$, $p = .016$, led to significant deterioration of model fit, suggesting that these paths varied significantly between the samples (discussed further below). Based on these results, we estimated a partly constrained model (in which we freed only those paths that differed significantly between the groups). This overall model showed good fit to the data,

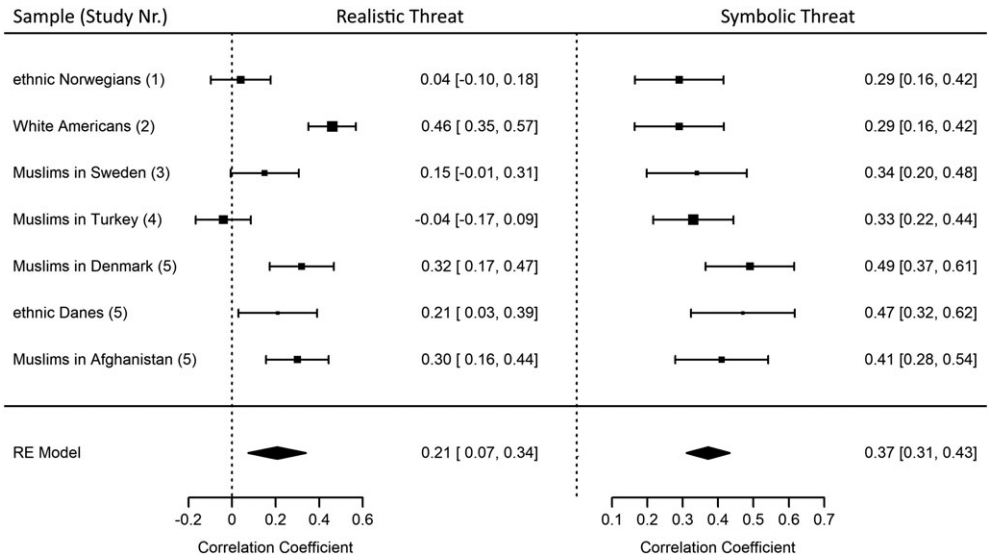

Fig. 2: Meta analysis for the effects of realistic and symbolic threats on outgroup hostility

$\chi^2(8) = 7.24$, $p = .511$, *CFI* = 1, *RMSEA* = .00, 90% CI [0.00, 0.10], *SRMR* = .05, see lower-panel of Figure 1 for the estimated, constrained model. The Muslim Danish sample contributed $\chi^2 = 1.94$ to the overall χ^2; the native Danish sample contributed $\chi^2 = 2.21$; and the Afghani sample contributed $\chi^2 = 3.09$. This pattern suggested a comparable fit across groups.

Both symbolic and realistic threats had significant direct effects on violent behavioral intentions for all three groups (see Table 2 and Figure 1). To test the relative strength of these effects of symbolic and realistic threats on behavioral intentions (across all samples), we constrained these paths to equality. This led to attenuated model fit, suggesting that the strength of the paths differed significantly, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 9.39$, $p = .002$. Indeed, symbolic threat had a significantly stronger effect on violent intentions than did realistic threat.

Next, we tested the indirect effects of religious group identification on violent intentions using boostrapping. Across the samples, religious group identity had an indirect and positive effect on violent intentions mediated by symbolic threat ($B = .16$, 95% CI [.10, .21]), which did not differ significantly between the groups as consequence of the imposed constraints. However, religious group identity indirectly lead to higher violent intentions via realistic threat among Muslims living in Denmark, $B = .11$, 95% CI [.05, .16], as well as ethnic Danes, $B = .11$, 95% CI [.05, .16], but *not* among Afghans living in Afghanistan, $B = .04$, 95% CI [−.01, .08]. The indirect effects in the sample of Muslims in Denmark and ethnic Danes did not differ in strength, $\Delta B = -.001$, 95% CI [−.06, .07]. However, the indirect effect via realistic threat in the Afghan sample differed significantly from this indirect effect among Muslims living in Denmark $\Delta B = .07$, 95% CI [.01, .14], as well as ethnic majority Danes $\Delta B = .07$, 95% CI [.14, .15].

Finally, and in line with previous studies, to test whether these findings were robust to the introduction of demographic variables for age, gender, education and socio-economic status. All paths that were significant without these control variables remained so in this analysis ($\beta s \geq 0.19$, $ps \leq .02$).

We found no empirical support for an alternative model where religious identification instead moderated the effects of perceived threats on outgroup hostility (Danish Muslims: realistic threat: $\beta = .03$, $p = .668$; symbolic threat: $\beta = .11$, $p = .123$; non-Muslim Danes: realistic threat: $\beta = -.12$, $p = .200$; symbolic threat: $\beta = .16$, $p = .099$, and Afghan Muslims: realistic threat: $\beta = .02$, $p = .810$; symbolic threat: $\beta = .06$, $p = .353$).

Meta-Analysis

Finally, in accordance with recent recommendations for multi-study papers (Lakens & Evers, 2014), we meta-analyzed the effects of symbolic and realistic threats[6] on the dependent variables across the studies using the *metafor* package in R. Since the samples were collected from a selection of possible contexts and groups, a linear random effects model was chosen. All β effects (see Table 2) were included as data points and the meta-analysis was run separately for realistic and symbolic threats because the β effects were taken from the SEM models and hence represented effects controlling for the other type of threat. Realistic threat had an overall effect size of $r = .21$, $SE = .07$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [.07, .34], while symbolic threat had an overall effect of $r = .37$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.31, .43], see Figure 2. Heterogeneity tests suggested substantial variance in effects for realistic threat, $Q(6) = 45.22$, $p < .001$, $I^2 = 84.12$ [61.92, 96.50], but not for symbolic threat, $Q(6) = 9.43$, $p = .151$, $I^2 = 36.48$ [.00, 86.94].

General Discussion

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first comparative study that explored the role of threat perceptions in predicting out-group hostility and support for violent

[6]The terror threat was not included in this analysis.

extremism across various cultural contexts, using different populations of Muslims and non-Muslims. Previous research has predominantly focused on comparing the effects of symbolic and realistic threats among Westerners only (i.e., Fetzer, 2000; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). In contrast, our investigations focused on both high and low power, WEIRD and non-WEIRD populations and found highly consistent results, confirming the contributions of threat perceptions to out-group hostility and violence across cultures: In five studies, conducted across various groups and contexts, we demonstrate a common psychology of outgroup hostility and violence among non-Muslims in Europe and the US, and Muslims in Europe, Afghanistan and Turkey that is driven by perceived realistic and, in particular, symbolic intergroup threats. Terror threat that was measured in the first two studies was *not* related to outgroup hostility.

We hypothesized that the more non-Muslim Europeans saw Muslim culture and practices as clashing with the West's cherished values and way of life (i.e., the more they experienced symbolic threat), and the more they saw Muslims as a threat to their group's resources and safety (i.e., the more they experienced realistic and terror threats), the more hostile mobilization they would display against Muslims. We further hypothesized that the same mechanisms would be at play among Muslim minority and majority groups - namely, Muslims residing as minority-group members in Europe, and Muslims in the Muslim-majority countries of Afghanistan and Turkey. We also reasoned that religious group identity would be a reliable driver of perceived threat based on previous research (Riek et al., 2006; Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Stephan et al., 2002). Hence, in all groups, we expected individuals who were strongly identified with their group would perceive the greatest threats, in turn mediating the negative effects of religious identification on outgroup hostility.

These predictions of a common psychology of threat were strongly supported by very similar patterns of results across the different cultural contexts. Supporting the consistency of the findings, both symbolic and realistic threats explained intergroup violence and hostility, but nevertheless with few exceptions symbolic threat took a more prominent role across all populations and contexts. This equivalence was further supported by results of the meta-analysis that showed little heterogeneity for the effects of symbolic threat. Another consistent finding across all studies was that participants with strong ingroup identification experienced the highest level of threat. In fact, in all studies, religious group identification exerted indirect effects on the outcome measures via its association with higher levels of perceived symbolic and/or realistic threats. Hence, highly-identified Christians and Muslims both reported more symbolic threat and consequently expressed more outgroup hostility. Moreover, the models were statistically identical across all groups, confirming the consistency of our main findings. In contrast, we found no evidence whatsoever in any study that the strength of religious identification instead moderated the effect of perceived threats on outgroup hostility. Our results therefore provide relatively consistent evidence of similar factors motivating hostility across all three groups and contexts.

These results are interesting in light of prior literature, which argued for context sensitivity in the prominence and potency of various types of threats. According to integrated threat theory, the type of threat that often emerges as the main source of outgroup prejudice may vary between different contexts (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) reflecting their social and political situation (see Bizman & Yinon, 2001). Despite this, symbolic threat emerged consistently as the stronger predictor of outgroup hostility, compared to realistic and terror threats.

The first two studies suggested that symbolic, and to some extent, realistic threats were associated with Westerners' anti-Muslim attitudes and behavioral intentions. Specifically, both threats significantly explained willingness to persecute Muslims in the second study. At the same time, it is worth pointing out that only symbolic threat was related to support for PEGIDA-like movements in Study 1, and terror threat was not associated with outgroup hostility in either of the two studies. Thus, anti-immigrant reactions among Norwegians and Americans may be primarily rooted in the fear of 'cultural contamination' by immigration from Muslim countries, rather than fear of economic competition or terrorism. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Norwegian study was conducted in 2015 before the recent refugee crises and the American study was conducted in early 2016, before the most recent wave of Islamist terrorism in the USA and Western Europe. Given the current security climate and the significant increase in the number of refugees entering Western countries, it is possible that realistic and terror threats may play a more important role in explaining hostility against Muslims in contemporary America and Norway (and elsewhere in Europe).

Next, we examined the perspective of Muslims, testing whether the same social psychological threat processes would be at play in explaining violent intentions toward the West. Whereas the vast majority of research on support for anti-Western violence has been conducted in the context of the Middle East (i.e., Levin, Roccas, Sidanius, & Pratto, 2015; Sidanius et al., 2004; Sidanius et al., 2015), here we have distinguished between, on the one hand, Muslim residents in Sweden and Denmark, and on the other hand, Muslim residents in Turkey and Afghanistan to examine whether these groups differed. One might have expected realistic threat to be a stronger driver of outgroup hostility among Muslims with personal experience of Western foreign policy. Nonetheless, symbolic threat emerged as the most consistent predictor among Muslims living both in Scandinavia and Turkey and Afghanistan. For example, symbolic threat was consistently associated with outgroup hostility among Swedish Muslims with or without personal experience of foreign occupation/

interventions (see footnotes 5 and 6). In the Afghani sample, the effect of symbolic threat was even statistically stronger than that of realistic threat despite the fact that Afghans have been the direct target of Western military intervention over decades. One reason why symbolic threat was consistently associated with anti-Western violence may be Muslims' sense that Western societies often reject Islamic values and cast them as inferior, causing them to feel that their cultures are devalued and under constant threat. This highlights the potential costs of policies such as the recent ban of the Burkini in France and Donald Trump's executive order banning Muslims from entering the US from six Muslim majority nations, all of which may contribute to a sense of rejection, humiliation and ultimately support of violence.

Another possible reason for the stronger effects of symbolic threat might be that many Muslims perceive Western military intervention in symbolic terms as an attack against Islamic values and dignity (Newport, 2002). Indeed, many Muslims perceive the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as religious wars between Islam and Christianity (Lia, 2008; Roy, 2004). This perception is not surprising given the fact that Pentagon training materials for years instructed officers that their main mission was to defeat Islam and reduce it to cult status, and many high ranking American personnel including General Stanley McChrystal described themselves as modern crusaders set in a path against Islam (Hussain, 2013).

Together, Studies 1 through 4 gave evidence of threat perceptions similarly driving intergroup hostility across different groups and contexts. Yet, as we used measures designed to be culture-appropriate in each study, we were unable to directly compare the effects between the groups in the first four studies. Hence, in the last, multi-group study, we used the exact same and well-established items to measure the key constructs among Muslims and non-Muslims in Denmark, and Muslims in Afghanistan. The result of multi-group path analysis revealed consistent patterns across the different populations and contexts. Symbolic and realistic threats were equivalently associated with outgroup hostility across the samples, confirming the proposed common psychology of outgroup hostility. Moreover, the effect of symbolic threat was stronger than that of realistic threat across the groups. Finally, when meta-analyzing the effects of symbolic and realistic threats on the dependent variables used across the studies, results of a random effects model demonstrated that symbolic threat had the strongest effect on the dependent variables.

One reason for why symbolic threat emerges as such a robust driver of hostility may be because the intergroup conflict between Muslim and non-Muslim populations is increasingly framed in terms of incompatible cultural value systems (i.e., "clash of cultures") that presumably exist between the two groups. The discussions of a value-based divide between non-Muslims and Muslims, and an exaggeration of cultural differences between these two groups is widespread among the public, media, politicians and commentators (i.e., Murray, 2017), and may further amplify intergroup tension.

Limitations and Societal Implications

It has to be noted that, although the causal assumptions in our models are based on previous research using designs that allow for causal conclusions (i.e., Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Grant, 1993), our analyses relied on correlational data, and therefore cannot speak directly to causality or rule out a reversed relation between outgroup hostility and threat perceptions. In fact, one could assume that the relationship between threat perceptions and outgroup attitudes may be bidirectional. However, to the best of our knowledge, experimental and longitudinal studies testing this reversed prediction remain to be conducted (see also Riek et al., 2006). While it would be ideal for assessing causality if future work were to experimentally manipulate the constructs we examined, we note that conducting such experiments in the tense intergroup contexts examined by the present research is fraught. For instance, it may not be defensible to persuasively prime threat perceptions to investigate their effects on actual intentions to engage in violence, for fear of the experimental manipulations actually making participants more prone to carrying out such actions.

Although, we measured violent behavioral intentions against outgroups, the fact that we were not able not measure actual behavior in the present work is a limitation. This increases the potential risk that our results are affected by and may not directly reflect behavior. It should also be mentioned that the inclusion of alternative mediators could have been beneficial to further parse out the unique effects of symbolic and realistic threats. For instance, including measures of social dominance orientation or a sense of individual and group insignificance would have been beneficial as they have predicted support for extreme intergroup violence in previous research (Jasko, LaFree, & Kruglanski, 2017; Levin, Roccas, et al., 2015; Levin et al., 2012; Sidanius et al., 2004, 2016; Thomsen et al., 2008).

Despite our emphasis on the role of threat perceptions and our evidence suggesting their importance in explaining support of violent intentions, other variables likely also explain variation in both Muslims' and non-Muslims' hostility toward each other. For example, focusing on Muslims' endorsement of group-based extremism, others have proposed alternative factors such as non-clinical personality traits, relative deprivation, perceived superiority of the ingroup, illegitimacy of authorities and perceived injustice (e.g., Doosje et al., 2013; Obaidi et al., unpublished data; Obaidi et al., in press; van Bergen et al., 2015). We see our variables as closely tied to the factors above. For example, we would expect realistic threats to be related to, or predicted by, feelings of relative deprivation, and symbolic threat to be associated with perceived superiority of the ingroup, as demonstrated in previous research (i.e., Doosje et al., 2013).

Our findings, hence, contribute and complement a growing body of empirical research focusing on the causes of Muslim and Western right-wing extremism. Maybe most importantly, we extend this literature demonstrating a common psychology of outgroup hostility that cuts across a variety of populations, national borders and cultural contexts.

Despite its limitations and the need for follow-up research, the present work has important implications for policy making and improving intergroup relations between the West and the Muslim world. The fact that both symbolic and realistic threats are important predictors of hostility suggests that those interested in achieving intergroup harmony will need to focus both on reducing perceptions of cultural incompatibility, as well as correcting any exaggerated perception of the degree of realistic threat actually posed by the "Other". With this in mind, recent work has suggested that providing individuals with information that the outgroup humanizes them can be effective in reducing intergroup violence (e.g., Kteily, Bruneau, & Hodson, 2016), while highlighting the religious commonalities between groups in conflicts may reduce intergroup aggression (Kunst, Thomsen, & Sam, 2014). It is possible that the positive effects of such messages will extend to reducing symbolic (and even possibly realistic) threat perceptions.

That our results demonstrate a similar psychology that responds to realistic and in particular symbolic threats across different populations and cultural contexts raises the promising possibility that psychological approaches to promoting intergroup harmony (by reducing threat perceptions) might be broadly effective across groups as well. Investigating this further should be a pressing academic and societal concern.

Supporting information

Additional Supporting Information may be found online in the supporting information tab for this article.

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