Old (Molotov) Cocktails in New Bottles?
"Price-Tag" and Settler Violence in Israel and the West Bank

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Abstract

In the early morning of July 31, 2015, masked attackers threw firebombs into two Palestinian homes in the West Bank village of Duma, south of Nablus, killing three Palestinian civilians. Contrary to claims by Israeli and Palestinian politicians, this attack was neither an isolated anomaly nor just another incident of settler violence. Instead, it was the latest attack in an important but largely unknown phenomenon called "price-tag," in which a loosely connected group of young Israelis called "hilltop youth" burn Palestinian mosques and destroy property in hundreds of attacks accompanied by threatening graffiti that references Israeli settlers, outposts, and anti-Arab slogans. Using an original dataset of price-tag incidents and interviews with key actors, we demonstrate that the perpetrators, targets, and strategies of price-tag are different than previous patterns of settler violence. Whereas previous settlers saw the Israeli state as legitimate and largely decided to cooperate with it, the hilltop youth have decided to confront it by using price-tag attacks to deter settlement withdrawals and chain-gang the state into a conflict with the Palestinians. This analysis of the strategic logic of price-tag reveals its potential to shift the political landscape within and between Israelis and Palestinians.

Introduction

In the early morning of July 31, 2015, masked attackers threw firebombs into two Palestinian homes in the West Bank village of Duma, south of Nablus. One home was unoccupied at the time, but the other housed a sleeping family of four. The youngest, an 18-month-old child, was killed in the blaze that engulfed his home, while his mother and father both died in the following weeks from their burns, leaving 4-year old Ahmed Dawabshe as the only survivor.

The Duma attack received extensive international media coverage, while Israeli political leaders treated the event as a tragic anomaly. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Reuven Rivlin, and Education Minister Naftali Bennett all took the rare step of calling the attack "terrorism," a term they usually reserve for attacks on Israelis. On the other hand, Palestinian politicians and some foreign observers claimed that this was a tragic but familiar event in the long, violent history of an Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[1]

Both perceptions are wrong. This attack was not an isolated anomaly, as suggested by the Israeli leaders, but neither was it simply a continuation of past patterns of Jewish violence in the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, as suggested by Palestinian leaders. The attack was part of a broader phenomenon called "price-tag" (*tag mehir*) in which "hilltop youth" (*noar hagavaot*)—a loosely connected group of young Israelis that creates and populates many of the outposts in the West Bank—burn Palestinian mosques and destroy property in attacks accompanied by threatening graffiti that often references Israeli settlers, outposts, and anti-Arab slogans.[2] This violence is meant to send a message to the Israeli government and its citizens, Palestinians, and international observers alike that the perpetrators are willing to take risks to maintain control of their outposts and impose a high political, economic, and social "price" on anyone that they see as a threat to their enterprise.

Although price-tag is a significant phenomenon, it has received little scholarly attention and even less systematic explanation backed by original data and fieldwork in the region, despite the fact that it poses a number of key empirical and theoretical puzzles.[3] First, if the objective is to influence the Israeli government, why do the attackers predominantly strike Palestinian targets? Second, why would price-tag perpetrators target and initiate conflict with an Israeli government led by Benjamin Netanyahu, arguably the most pro-settlement prime minister Israel has ever had?

Third, if the attacks are designed to help Israeli settlements, why would settler leaders condemn them, and what does this condemnation say about the relationship between price-tag and the broader national-religious settler community? Danny Dayan, then the head of the unofficial body that leads the national-religious settlers, the Yesha Council, stated that aspects of

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[1] Diaa Hadid and Jodi Rudoren, "Jewish Arsonists Suspected in West Bank Attack That Killed Palestinian Toddler," *The New York Times*, July 31, 2015.

[2] The Israeli government distinguishes between unauthorized "outposts" and authorized "settlements" that the state either planned or authorized after the fact. Other states consider both settlements and outposts in the West Bank to be illegal under international law.

[3] Excellent earlier work dealt with right wing violence in general. Ian Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (Council on Foreign Relations, 1988); Ehud Sprinzak, "Extremism and Violence in Israeli Democracy," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 12, no. 3–4 (September 1, 2000): 209–36; Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Ami Pedahzur, *The Triumph of Israel's Radical Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). A key exception is Dan Byman and Natan Sachs, "The Rise of Settler Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 5 (October 2012): 73–86.

price-tag are the "gravest danger to our camp."[4] Naftali Bennett, then the recently retired head of the Yesha Council—and now the leader of the pro-settler party Jewish Home—stated that price-tag represents the "number one threat to the nature of [the settlement project in] Judea and Samaria." Finally, to what extent is price-tag actually different from settler violence in previous eras, and what do its similarities and differences tell us about its future trajectory and impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

This article will answer each of these puzzles, while providing in-depth analysis of the causes and dynamics of price-tag backed by original data and fieldwork. First, we present our analysis of the targets, causes, and perpetrators of price-tag based on our dataset and fieldwork. We find that although 51% of price-tag attacks target private property, the burning and vandalizing of Palestinian mosques on 40 separate occasions is an escalatory tactic designed to provoke conflict that chain-gangs the Israeli state and deters subsequent actions against the perpetrators. Only 3% of price-tag attacks are claimed, but our analysis of the ubiquitous graffiti at the site of attacks provides a unique window into the causes of price-tag, which is driven by the Israeli government's removal of illegal outposts in the West Bank. This is further supported by the fact that over the past eight years, we found that price-tag attacks happen every 88 days on average, but the time is cut by more than half (39 days) after an outpost or settlement withdrawal.

Second, we compare price-tag to previous settler violence in terms of its strategies and relations with the Israeli state. Price-tag is the latest iteration in a decades-old debate within the national-religious settler community over how best to expand settlements and safeguard them against removal.[5] Whereas previous settlers saw the Israeli state as legitimate and largely decided to cooperate with it, the main price-tag perpetrators—the "hilltop youth" who live in unauthorized outposts in the West Bank—have decided to confront it. The hilltop youth use a form of what Steven David identified as omnibalancing, in which they shift their behavior to confront the greatest threat to their enterprise, whether external or internal.[6] The perpetrators' use of violence is intended to secure settlement expansion through deterrence not only against out-group targets – the Palestinians – but also against in-group targets – the state. They see the state as a significant threat after its withdrawal from Gaza and four settlements in the northern West Bank in 2005.[7] They therefore seek to alter the policies of the settler movement, which they see as too accommodating. The hilltop youth reject the authority of the national-religious settler leadership and the Israeli state, and their price-tag attacks proactively aim to deter settlement withdrawal, in part by striking members of Israeli NGOs who lobby against the settlements and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) that removes outposts.

In the next section, we analyze the reactions to price-tag and its broader political implications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel's Chief of Police, Yohanan Danino, explained on June

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[4] Chaim Levinson, "The Chairman of the Yesha Council: Violence is Common in our Camp," *Haaretz*, June 24, 2012.

[5] Our conclusion builds on Aran and Hassner's suggestion that Jewish religious violence has transformed over time. Gideon Aran and Ron Hassner, "Religious Violence in Judaism: Past and Present," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25, no. 3 (2013): 355–405.

[6] Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics* 43 no. 2 (1991): 233-256.

[7] In the summer of 2005 the Israeli government removed unilaterally some 9400 settlers from the Gaza Strip and from four settlements in the northern West-Bank. Israeli forces left the Gaza Strip, while Israel retained control over the areas that once housed the settlements in the northern West Bank. Thought the settlers were financially compensated, they fiercely resisted their removal. See Jeremy Pressman, "Israeli Unilateralism and Israeli–Palestinian Relations, 2001–2006," *International Studies Perspectives*, 7: 360–76; Robert H. Mnookin, Ehud Eiran, and Shula Gilad "Is Unilateralism Always Bad? Negotiation Lessons from Israel's "Unilateral" Gaza Withdrawal," *Negotiation Journal*, 30, no. 2 (April 2014): 131–156.

18, 2013 that "[price-tag] is the deed that can flare up the state of Israel and beyond," while Israeli journalist Ben Kaspit warned in January 8, 2014 that "the third intifada will start with an out of control 'price-tag' attack."[8] Despite the tough talk and the significant impact on the daily lives of Palestinians and Israelis in the West Bank, only 5% of price-tag incidents have resulted in arrests of suspects. Settlement withdrawals and the prosecution of settlers is an incredibly sensitive issue in Israel that threatens the cohesion of its key institutions, including an IDF that is increasingly staffed by settlers themselves. Furthermore, price-tag poses a significant threat to any two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as it stokes animosity and mistrust among Israelis and Palestinians, weakens the position of the Palestinian Authority, and makes withdrawal from settlements less likely—which is precisely the goal of its perpetrators.

In the final sections we explore the theoretical and political implications of the phenomenon under investigation. These sections explain the importance of analyzing the national-religious settlers, including the hilltop youth, as a social movement with center-flank dynamics. We then place our findings within the broader context of the emerging literature on settlement projects and detail how price-tag will continue to impact Israeli-Palestinian relations and the prospects for peace.

Defining Price-Tag and Identifying its Targets, Causes, and Perpetrators

There is no single definition for "price-tag." The term is used by perpetrators, supporters, governments, and security services in different ways. Some sectors of the Israeli settlement population in the West-Bank refer to price-tag with the term "mutual responsibility" ("*Arvut-Hadadit*"), which implies that the settlement community works together to protect its enterprise. The United States government defines price-tag as "property crimes and violent acts by extremist Jewish individuals and groups in retaliation for activity they deemed to be anti-settlement."[9] The United Nations defines price-tag as "attacks on Palestinians and their property as a means of discouraging the Israel authorities from dismantling outposts."[10] However, by 2013 the UN abandoned the distinction between price-tag and other forms of settler violence in the West Bank, making it impossible to distinguish using UN data.[11] Different definitions can lead to different assessments regarding the extent of the phenomenon, its sources, and how it should be treated. As a result of the initial conceptual confusion, the former Israeli police commander of the West Bank (Shai) district claimed that from 2008-2010, the Israeli Internal Security Agency treated price-tag as a more serious threat than did the regional police command in the West Bank.[12]

Nonetheless, we believe that a consensus definition exists that both resonates with existing understandings and allows for systematic analysis. For the purposes of this article, price-tag

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[8] Galey Tzahal, "Danino: Price Tag is Dangerous, We Will Make Arrests," *Galey Tzahal*, June 18, 2013. Ben Kaspit, "The Third Intifada Will Start with an Out of Control 'Price-Tag' Attack," *Thepost*, January 8, 2014.

[9] United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013*.

[10] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Settler Violence in the West Bank*, January-December 2012.

[11] Yehezkel Lein interview with author, February 13, 2013. The United Nations stopped doing so as its researchers concluded that many settler attacks led to the military's intervention, making it an event that includes all three parties. In turn, this created difficulties for the United Nations' researchers to code events as settlers vs. Palestinians as opposed to Israeli military vs. Palestinians.

[12] Police Maj. General (Ret.) Shlomi Kaatabi interview with author, February 2, 2012.

incidents a) involve the threat or use of violence, often expressed with graffiti b) are perpetrated by Israeli Jews, c) take place in Israel, the West Bank, or border areas, and d) have as one of their objectives the prevention of Israeli government withdrawal from settlements and outposts in the West Bank. The term "price-tag" was coined on July 24, 2008, following the removal of a temporary housing unit from an outpost by the Israeli government.[13] A settler from Yitzhar told the Israeli daily *Haaretz* that "the police must understand that there is going to be a high 'price-tag' for any events such as this one."[14] Our dataset—which consists of 185 attacks carried out between December 2008 and August 2015 —somewhat undercounts price-tag incidents, as we only include those reported in a collection of Israeli, Palestinian, and American newspapers.[15] However, we are confident that we capture the general trends of price-tag, and our dataset is unlikely to miss any major attacks.[16]

Targets: Palestinian Property, Mosques and Churches, the IDF and Israeli activists

51% of price-tag attacks target personal property, generally that of Palestinians in the West Bank. Typical price-tag incidents include a set of attacks on May 28, 2013 in East Jerusalem and the Palestinian villages of Al-Zubeidat and Marj Naja near Jericho in the eastern West Bank. The attacks included the arson of over ten cars—37% of price-tag attacks involve arson. The attacks also involved the spraying of graffiti on some of the cars and numerous Palestinian houses in the area. All three attack sites had the graffiti message "*tag mehir*" ("price-tag") nearby.

Attacks against Muslim and Christian institutions have increasingly become the face of the phenomenon, as price-tag attacks have targeted mosques forty times and churches five times (see Figure 1). In June 2011, attackers burned part of a Palestinian mosque in the village of Al Mughayyir, near Ramallah. The attackers spray-painted "price-tag" and "Alei Ayin" on the mosque walls, in reference to the Israeli security forces dismantling of the unauthorized outpost at Alei Ayin the previous week. On December 12, 2012, the tires of three cars were slashed outside the Monastery of the Cross in Jerusalem, while graffiti sprayed on its outer walls read, "Happy Hanukkah—price-tag," "Jesus is a son-of-a-bitch," and "Victory of the Maccabees."[17]

These first two types of attacks target the Palestinian, Muslim, and Christian "other," but price-tag attacks have also struck three types of Jewish Israelis perceived as enemies of the settlement project: anti-settlement NGOs that lobby to have outposts removed, Israeli security forces that remove them and evacuate settlers, and settler leaders that make deals with the government for some removals. On July 16, 2012, perpetrators sprayed threatening graffiti on Peace Now activist Hagit Ofran's home in Jerusalem, which included the words "Hagit you're dead."[18] Similar attacks in previous months included the spray-painting of "price-tag—Migron"

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[13] There are about 100 outposts—which were first created starting in the late 1990s—as opposed to 125 "regular" settlements. Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2015*, No. 2.16, 1

[14] "Background on Settler Violence," *Peace Now*, January 1, 2011.

[15] We gathered news articles from *The New York Times*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *Ha'aretz*, *Ynet*, *Israel National News*, *Ma'ariv*, and *Ma'an*.

[16] To the extent bias exists in our data, it will be undercounting minor incidents without casualties, much property damage, or much information on the perpetrators, thus making media coverage less likely.

[17] Nir Hasson, "Vandals Spray 'Price-Tag' Graffiti on Jerusalem Monastery," *Haaretz*, December 12, 2012.

[18] Peace Now is an Israeli non-governmental organization that advocates for Israeli withdrawal from the West-Bank and opposes Israeli settlement activity there.

on her apartment door, a reference to the planned evacuation of the Migron outpost for which Ofran had advocated.[19]

In terms of Israeli military targets, attackers infiltrated an IDF base in the Binyamin region of West Bank on the night of September 27, 2011 and slashed the tires and cut the cables of 12 army vehicles. The attackers spray-painted "price-tag" on the walls of the base along with references to the Migron outpost, where the IDF had dismantled three illegal homes just two days earlier.[20] A few months later, on December 20, 2011, fifty activists broke into the Efraim Regional Brigade's headquarters near the West Bank city of Qalqilya in broad daylight, where they threw stones—wounding the brigade commander—slashed tires and damaged army vehicles.[21] A similar event occurred in the early hours of April 8, 2014 when hundreds of settlers attacked Israeli military forces as they were dismantling a small number of illegal structures in the settlement of Yitzhar. The settlers stoned the soldiers, damaged military vehicles and wrecked a small military position next to the settlement.[22]

Figure 1. Price-Tag by the Numbers

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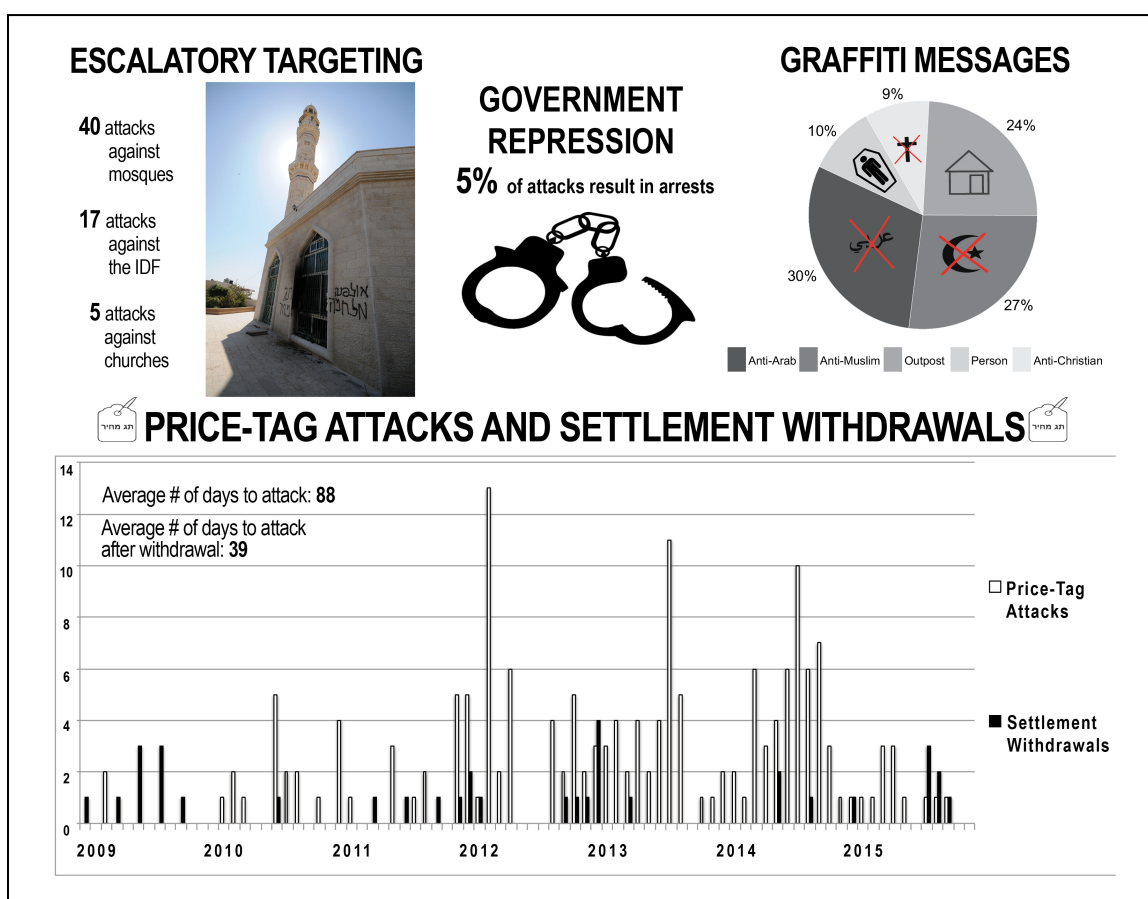
[19] "Peace Now activist's home vandalized for the third time in a year," *Haaretz*, July 16, 2012.

[20] Illegal here refers to local planning and zoning laws. Anshel Pfeffer and Chaim Levinson, "Israeli Settlers Vandalize IDF Base in First 'Price tag' Act against Army," *Haaretz*, September 7, 2011.

[21] Ethan Bronner, "Settlers Riot, Attacking Israeli Base and Post," *New York Times*, December 31, 2011.

[22] Yoav Zeitun and Itai Blumenthal, "Clash and Demolitions in Yitzhar: Policeman Wounded and IDF Post Damaged." *Ynet*, April 8, 2014.

Causes: Settlement Withdrawal

Given that attackers claim only 3% of incidents, identifying the objectives of price-tag attacks may appear difficult, Threatening graffiti messages accompanying attacks are the calling cards of price-tag, however; as one perpetrator said, "With one spray you have the power to make headlines."[23] Translation and analysis of the graffiti of all price-tag attacks in our dataset provides a window into the motivations behind them. Content analysis shows us that beyond "price-tag" itself, the most common themes written in spray paint are anti-Arab and anti-Muslim slogans, as well as references to particular outposts—often those recently demolished or evacuated—and particular people—often settlers recently killed (see Figure 1).

For example, the masked attackers left two graffiti messages in Hebrew on the scorched walls of the Dawabshe home in Duma: "Revenge!" written below a Star of David and "Long live the Messiah" (see Figure 2). This attack occurred two days after Israeli security forces dismantled two illegal structures built on private Palestinian land in the settlement of Beit El. One month before the attack in Duma, 25-year-old settler Malachi Rosenfeld was killed by Palestinians a few miles away.[24] In Judaism, the preliminary period of mourning lasts a month and ends in a memorial service. The context, timing, and "Revenge!" graffiti thus suggest that the attack fits the pattern of price-tag following actions against settlements and settlers. Other attacks included graffiti for "Ma'aleh Revaham," an outpost south of Bethlehem where the Israeli government demolished a number of homes. Along with "price-tag," the May 28, 2013 attacks in East Jerusalem, Al-Zubeidat, and Marj Naja included multiple graffiti messages like "for the anniversary of Evitar," referring to 32-year-old settler Evitar Borovski, who was killed one month earlier in the central sector of the West Bank.[25]

In addition to reading the 'writing on the wall,' analysis of the timing of price-tag attacks and settlement withdrawals—when the Israeli government announces or carries out the destruction or evacuation of all or part of an outpost or settlement—suggests a significant connection. Over the past eight years, we found that price-tag attacks happen every 88 days on average, but the time is cut by more than half (39 days) after a settlement withdrawal. Indeed, the graffiti on the Jab'a mosque in Figure 1 reads "price-tag" and "Ulpana war" in reference to the Ulpana outpost that was ordered to be evacuated just before the attack.[26]

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[23] Naftali Vertzberger, Interview with author, June 2013. Naftali Vertzberger is an attorney for the Honenu organization and has represented many suspected Israeli terrorists and price-tag perpetrators.

[24] Roi Yanovsky, "Terror Victim Malachi Rosenfeld Laid to Rest," *Ynet*, July 1, 2015.

[25] Kobi Finkler, "'Price-tag' in the Valley: The Thirtieth to Evitar, May the Lord Avenge his Blood," *Arutz Sheva,* May 29, 2013.

[26] Furthermore, pamphlets that present the objectives and strategies of price-tag support these conclusions. Nadav Shragai, "The New Policy Of The Settlers: Price Tag For Each Removal By The Israel Defense Force", *Haaretz*, October 3, 2008.

Figure 2. "Revenge!" Graffiti on the Burned House in Duma

Perpetrators: The Hilltop Youth

Most of the perpetrators of price-tag hail from the "hilltop youth." This is blanket term that covers a number of groups of West Bank settlers that share common geographical, demographic, and ideological attributes. First, hilltop youth generally reside in unauthorized outposts—settlements that were created without the formal consent of the Israeli government, generally within the past decade or so. As such, they help bypass international pressure on Israel (and subsequently from the government itself) to halt the construction of new settlements. The outposts do not come in one flavor: some are distant neighborhoods of existing settlements and replicate their communal, middle-class life style, such as Mitzpe Dani, Ma'ale Shlomo, and Yeshuv Ha'daat. These outposts enjoy some support from the mainstream national-religious settlers and some state agencies.[27] Other outposts are located further away from existing settlements, may include only 1-3 families, and were created in order to allow their inhabitants an alternative lifestyle, usually one that has new-age, back-to-nature elements, such as Skali's Farm, Mul Nevo, and Ma'ale Oren.[28]

Almost all hilltop youth are religious, but the distant outposts (mostly in the southern sector of the West Bank) include experimentation with new forms of Jewish religiosity.[29] While most outposts are home to young settlers—usually under 30 years old—a small number of outposts are farms run by older charismatic settlers, who serve as a focal point for younger residents that are

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[27] Talya Sasson, *An Interim Report on Unauthorized Outposts*, 2002, 9.
[28] Michael Feige, *Settling in the Hearts: Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories,* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2009), 237-38.
[29] Gideon Aran, *Kookism: The Roots of Gush Emunim, Jewish Settlers' Sub-Culture, Zionist Theology, Contemporary Mesianism* (Tel-Aviv: Carmel, 2013), 459.

often drawn from the fringe of various religious communities in territorial Israel.[30] Another group commonly associated with the hilltop youth are students in some of the more radical religious schools (Yeshivot) in a small number of existing settlements, most notably, the "Od Yosef Hai" Yeshiva in Yitzhar. Indeed, following the attack in Yitzhar on security forces in April 2014, the Israeli border police occupied the Yeshiva's building in retaliation.[31]

Table 1. Price-Tag vs. Previous Forms of Settlement-Related Violence

	Previous Violence	**Price-Tag**
Time Frame	Late 1970s-onwards	2008-onwards
Perpetrators	Settlers living in authorized settlements	Hilltop youth living in unauthorized outposts
Objectives	Gain and maintain control of the settlements and surrounding territory	Gain and maintain control of the settlements and surrounding territory Prevent outpost withdrawal
Relationship with Israeli State	Cooperate with the state and gain power within it	Confront the state and delegitimize it
Targets	Palestinians Palestinian property Israeli anti-settlement activists	Palestinians Palestinian property Israeli military Israeli anti-settlement activists Israeli settlement leaders Muslim and Christian religious sites
Strategies	Deter and intimidate Palestinians	Deter the Israeli government, IDF, and anti-settlement activists Chain-gang Israel to a conflict with the Palestinians

Price-Tag vs. Previous Settler Violence: New Strategies and Relations with the State

Many Palestinians see "price-tag" as a new name for an old phenomenon. Abdul Karim Sharaf, mayor of the Palestinian village of Jab'a whose mosque was attacked, noted, "Our community has been the target of violence by Israeli settlers for generations; it did not start with the burning of our mosque and price-tag."[32] Although he is correct that settler violence has existed for generations, price-tag is different in a number of key ways.

The settlers' goal of increasing control of the West Bank, the growth of the Israeli settler population, and violence between some settlers and Palestinians have continued for decades.[33]

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[30] Pedahzur, *The Triumph of Israel's Radical Right*, (see note 3 above), 136.

[31] Efrat Porsher, "Border Police Forces Gain Control Over The Yeshiva Building In Yitzhar," *Israel Ha'Yom*, April 11, 2014.

[32] Abdul Karim Sharaf, Interview with Author, August 12, 2012.

[33] In 1982 the Israeli Attorney General appointed a special team to review investigations and prosecutions of Israeli settlers accused of acts of violence against Palestinians in the West-Bank. Israeli Ministry of Justice, *Investigating Suspicions against Israelis in the West Banka and Gaza: A Report of the Review Team" (Chairperson Yehudit Karp, Esq.),* 1982.

Price-tag represents a new form of violence, however, most specifically in its relationship with the Israeli state—which its perpetrators see as an illegitimate threat—and its strategies—which include triadic deterrence, chain-ganging, and preemptive spoiling (see Table 1). This comparison is worthwhile not only to distinguish price-tag as a phenomenon, but also to address questions about its future and implications for the politics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A New Approach to an Old Debate: The National-Religious, Hilltop Youth, and the Israeli State

Price-tag is the latest iteration in a decades-old debate within the national-religious settler community over how best to expand settlements and safeguard them against removal. Many of the original settlements in the West Bank from the 1960s and 1970s—and almost all existing outposts—were created without official Israeli government approval, meaning they initially faced the possibility of destruction or relocation. Although the threat of removal was and is greatest for unauthorized settlements built from the bottom-up, it is not limited to them. After all, the Israeli government twice removed large-scale, authorized settlements when it withdrew from the Sinai in 1979-1982, and from Gaza and the northern West-Bank in 2005. Indeed, if Israel is to withdraw from some or all of the West Bank, it is largely assumed by scholars and practitioners that another round of settlement removal will follow.

The central question for settlers therefore was—and is—is the Israeli state an enemy or an ally in their struggle to establish Jewish settlement and control of the West Bank? Should the settlers cooperate with the Israeli state or confront it? These questions were familiar to the national-religious community long before Israel's capture of the West Bank in 1967. In fact, the community itself is composed of those in the Orthodox Jewish community who answered those questions in a particular way, as the national-religious are those who initially decided to reconcile Orthodox Judaism with Zionism and so work within the structure of the Israeli state.[34] However, just because the national-religious opted to recognize the Israeli state and support the Zionist project did not mean that they would work with the government on the settlement issue. Over the years, the national-religious settlers responded in two major ways to the possibility of settlement removal. Either they cooperated with the government or its agents, usually by agreeing to limited settlement removal in return for the development of settlements in other locations, or they confronted the government and its agents, usually through threats of violent clashes with security forces.

This tension was evident since the early days of Gush Emunim, the national-religious group that spearheaded settlement efforts in the 1970s. Gershon Shafat, one of the group's founders, described the tension between the two approaches: A smaller radical faction pushed for "an uncompromising position," but "we [the majority group]…had to prevent a clash with the Israel defense force," because "we thought Gush Emunim will only survive in the long term if it will reflect the broad national will."[35] Over the years the more conciliatory approach became dominant. The first generation of the national-religious settlers saw themselves as an integral part of Israeli society and indeed strove to be the "pioneers, the vanguard, not dissenters. A dissenter

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[34] National-religious ideology had its roots in the 19th century, and the national-religious settlers of the West Bank from 1967-present are one of many groups of adherents. Gershom Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977* (New York: Times Book, 2006); Aran and Hassner (see note 5 above).
[35] Gershon Shafat, *Gush Emunim: The Story Behind the Scenes* (Beit El: Beit El Press, 1995), 130.

leaves the mainstream, a pioneer on the other hand leads the way and everyone follows."[36] For these people, a direct clash with the state therefore would undermine the goal of rising to a national leadership position. The national-religious settlers intentionally followed the path pursed in the 20th century by the Israeli Labor movement, which gained political control in pre-state and then state institutions from 1933-1977 based on its ability to field numerous settlements that were perceived as serving the national cause.[37] Even in the mass removal of settlers in 1979-1982 and 2005, the national-religious leadership, which was generally comprised of the original Gush Emunim group, preferred not to clash violently with the security forces and allowed relocation to occur with limited and largely non-violent resistance.[38]

The hilltop youth and price-tag violence reflect a choice to move away from the cooperative model towards the state. Unlike their predecessors, hilltop youth make no effort to leave room for a compromise. Rather, hilltop youth aim for confrontation and deterrence by attacking not only Palestinians, but also Israeli military installations and personnel. This more threatening approach reflects a different vision regarding Israel and its position as a Jewish state. For the instigators of price-tag, the Israeli state does not represent a legitimate general will, as it does not follow Jewish laws. Therefore, there should be no effort to lead it or serve as its vanguard.[39] A suspect in one of the price-tag attacks stated that he refuses to assist the state because: "I do not collaborate with people who fight against the Jewish people, who fight the land of Israel, people who are the agents of a foreign government in our land."[40] This sentiment is supported by a survey of 56 hilltop youth by Shlomo Kaniel, who found that they have serious reservations about the state, including a sense among some that the ideological backbone of the state, Zionism, is obsolete.[41]

What drove this change in approach? Power, generational change, and omnibalancing.[42] First, the cooperative position of the old guard and the confrontational position of the hilltop youth are driven in part by their relative positions of power. The settler leaders of the 1960s and 1970s became far more politically powerful, which means they have much more to lose in a fight with the state personally (in terms of their jobs), organizationally (in terms of their parties and councils), and strategically (in terms of the numerous, populous authorized settlements they control).[43] On the other hand, the hilltop youth's position as a weak network of individuals on the

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Baruch Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-Territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, 1983).

[38] Myron Aronoff, "The Institutionalization and Cooperation of a Charismatic Messianic, Religious Political Revitalization Movement," in *The Impact of Gush Emunim: Politics and Settlement in the West-Bank*, ed. David Newman (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 61; David Weisburd and Hagit Lernau, "What Prevented Violence in Jewish Settlements in the Withdrawal from the Gaza Strip: Towards a Perspective of Normative Balance," *Journal of Dispute Resolution* 22, no. 1 (2006): 35–79.

[39] If anything, the hilltop youth see themselves as the vanguard of a renewed, authentic Jewish perspective in the face of moral and political decline.

[40] Elisha Ben-Kimon, "The Jewish Terrorism Boys: Fighting Against Foreign Rule," *Ynet*, December 1, 2015.

[41] Shlomo Kaniel, "Psychological Aspects of Hilltop Settlers in Judea and Samaria" (R & D Center Samaria and Jordan Valley, May 2003).

[42] Sara Hirschhorn, *City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement Since 1967* (Harvard University Press, forthcoming).

[43] The national religious settlers make up only 40% of the 311,431 settlers in the West Bank (501,856 with East Jerusalem), but they hold most of the leadership positions in key settlement institutions like the Yesha Council, and they have increasingly worked within the political apparatus of the Israeli state.

flank of the settler movement with loose control of scattered, sparsely populated outposts leaves them with little to lose, making them less risk-averse.

Second, many of the hilltop youth went to the hills to rebel against their elders and against the constraints of the hierarchical, semi-closed community of national-religious Jews.[44] Their anti-statist and individualistic approach is rooted, in the words of Michael Feige, in a "radical drive against all forms of establishment, including the bourgeoisie homes of their parents."[45] Therefore, while Gush Emunim's activists were more willing to withstand individual sacrifices for a collective good of advancing the broader settlement project, hilltop youth activists are committed first and foremost to their local outposts and are less concerned with the broader movement. While the hardliners in Gush Emunim accepted the moderates' lead, following the religious rule of "follow the majority," the hilltop youth do not follow the majority decision and indeed reject the Yesha Council (the unofficial leadership body of the national-religious settlers), which they ridicule as the "Yeshu Council" or "The Council of Jesus"—a connection to some of the anti-Christian attacks and graffiti from price-tag.[46]

Finally, although created to explain the actions of weak states, the concept of omnibalancing helps to explain the behavior of the hilltop youth. Whereas earlier generations of settlers saw local Palestinians—or neighboring Arab states—as the greatest threat to their continued existence and security in the West Bank, the perpetrators of price-tag increasingly view the Israeli government as the biggest threat. On the one hand, one can look at the ever-increasing number of settlers in the West Bank and the Netanyahu government's historic support for the settlements and question this conclusion. However, perpetrators of price-tag can and do point to the fact that the Israeli state has surrendered land and settlements in the Sinai II Agreement (1975), the Camp David Accords (1978), the "Autonomy Plan" for the West Bank (1978), Oslo I and II (1993, 1995), Gaza (2005), and now outpost demolitions.[47] Furthermore, the prime ministers who led most of those withdrawals were supposed hard-liners from Likud, meaning that price-tag perpetrators see Netanyahu as exactly the type of leader who will use his hardline reputation to sell them out in negotiations. At the same time, Israeli settlers have never lost control of territory or settlements due to Palestinian conquest. Because of this change in threat perception, the Israeli withdrawal from the small outpost at Amona in 2006 led to more violent clashes than the entire withdrawal from Gaza and its 21 settlements the previous year.

New Strategies: Deterrence and the Manipulation of Risk

The new strategies and mechanisms of price-tag are the most complex and least understood changes from past violence. Although the hilltop youth and previous settlers share a number of common ends, they differ on the means to achieve them. How does their decision to confront or cooperate with the Israeli state impact their strategy? Scholars often use target selection as a proxy for group strategies, but price-tag demonstrates how groups can strike the same target in

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[44] Yair Sheleg, Interview with Authors, June 28, 2012; Michael Feige, *Settling in the Hearts: Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories* (see note 28 above), 229–34.

[45] Ibid., 237.

[46] Hagai Huberman, *Hanan Porat: Biography* (Tel Aviv: Yedito Sfarim, 2013), 107; Itamar Fleishman, "In the Wake of the Relocation," *Ynet*, June 17, 2012.

[47] Ironically, these agreements make the Israeli state appear as the larger threat to the hilltop youth not simply because the state removed settlements, but also because in doing so, they signed peace treaties with other countries, all but removing the previously dominant threat of conventional invasion by Arab neighbors.

the context of quite different strategies. For example, a 1994 report of an Israeli human rights organization concluded that settler violence at the time was directed against Palestinians in the context of Palestinian violence against settlers.[48] Settlers that participated in these violent events described them as self-defense or reprisals, and regardless of the accuracy of these claims, there was no attempt to tie these attacks into Israeli government activity. Much of the violence in the West Bank between settlers and Palestinians continues to fit into a paradigm of instigation, vengeance, and deterrence of the other, but some of the same targets are increasingly being attacked as part of new price-tag strategies.

For example, the head of the Shabak (Israel's Internal Security Agency), Yoram Cohen, explained that the price-tag perpetrators "want to make the government think twice about the removal of even one shack," but because they "cannot hurt the government and the security forces" they adopted a strategy of "terror and fear" and are attacking "Arabs and religious sites" believing that the "worse it becomes" the more the government would prefer to avoid removal of outposts.[49] The price-tag perpetrators thus hold up a match in the face of the Israeli government, communicating to them that any outpost withdrawal will lead to literal and figurative fires in the West Bank that the government will have to put out. In this way, the targeting of Palestinians becomes part of a triadic deterrence strategy, where the target of violence (the Palestinians) is quite distinct from the target of influence (the Israeli government).[50]

In addition to triadic deterrence, price-tag also aims to deter outpost withdrawal by striking directly at the Israeli security forces who carry out the withdrawals, the settler leaders who agree to them, and the anti-settlement activists who push for their removal in the first place. First, the attacks that received the most coverage in Israel and shocked many of its politicians and citizens were those on the IDF itself, long considered the untouchable crown jewel securing the Israeli state. The two most notable attacks occurred in September and December of 2011, respectively, when attackers infiltrated IDF bases, damaged army vehicles, and threw stones at a brigade commander.[51] Previous settler violence never attacked the IDF so blatantly and preemptively. In a 2008 interview, a young settler from Yitzhar said that "It is about time that our side will also include some crazy people...those that the Arabs and the military will say 'it is better not to confront such people'… they will think twice before they harm us."[52] A pamphlet distributed in the settlement of Beit El in preparation for possible military removal of illegal houses in the settlement further explained the logic of such attacks: "When the battle of preventing house removals starts in the gate of the military base, and not the gate of the settlement, its chances of success are far greater."[53]

Second, price-tag perpetrators took the unprecedented step of targeting mainstream national-religious settler leaders to deter their cooperation with the government. On June 18, 2012, hilltop

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[48] B'tselem, *Enforcing the Law on Israeli Citizens in the Territories,* 1994.

[49] Barak Ravid, "The Head of the Shabak Referring to 'Price-Tag': The Settlers of Yitzhar are Terrorizing the Government," *Haaretz*, February 3, 2012.

[50] Boaz Atzili and Wendy Pearlman, "Triadic Deterrence: Coercing Strength, Beaten by Weakness," *Security Studies* 21, no. 2 (2012): 301–35; Ian Lustick, "Terrorism in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Targets and Audiences," in *Terrorism in Context*, ed. Martha Crenshaw (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

[51] Anshel Pfeffer and Chaim Levinson, "Israeli Settlers Vandalize IDF Base in First 'Price Tag' Act against Army," *Haaretz*, September 7, 2011. Ethan Bronner, "Settlers Riot, Attacking Israeli Base and Post," *New York Times*, December, 13 2011.

[52] Nadav Shragai, "The New Policy of The Settlers: Price Tag For Each Removal By The Israel Defense Force," *Haaretz*, October 3, 2008.

[53] Itamar Fleishman, "Price Tag and Breaking into Bases: The Guide for the struggle Against Settlement Removal," *Ynet*, June 18, 2012.

youth punctured the car tires of Ze'ev (Zambish) Hever, a former leader of Gush Emunim who now heads Amana, an organization that builds and controls numerous settlements in the West Bank. At the time of the attack, Hever was negotiating with the leadership of the settlement of Beit El and Israeli government officials concerning the possible removal of a small number of illegal buildings in the settlement.[54] Price-tag attacks did not begin until after the state of Israel evicted some nine thousand settlers from the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank in 2005. These attacks by the hilltop youth reflect a defiance (and deterrence) of sorts against the moderate approach the traditional settler leadership showed in the face of that eviction, as well as subsequent ones.

Finally, attacks against anti-settlement Israeli activists are not unprecedented, although they now occur in a different context. The July 2012 attack on Hagit Ofran's home in Jerusalem was preceded by a 2008 attack in which a pipe bomb exploded outside the Jerusalem home of Zeev Sternhell, a Hebrew University professor who had spoken out against the settlements.[55] These attacks have a history that dates back to when a number of radical right-wing organizations targeted left-wing actors that supported withdrawal from the West-Bank soon after its capture in 1967, including Meron Benvenisti, the moderate Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem. Some, like Benvenisti, had graffiti sprayed on their homes, while others, like Kobi Niv, were physically attacked. The organization that led this effort was called "oppressing traitors" ("*Dikuy Bogdim*"). However by the end of the 1960s these organized attacks had generally subsided.[56] The few incidents that followed in later years, like the 1983 attack on a Peace Now demonstration in which one person was killed, followed the same 1960s model of a "response to the left wing protests" rather than targeting and deterring the state.[57]

To the extent the Israeli government and security forces cannot be deterred from getting involved, price-tag perpetrators want to chain-gang them into a conflict with the Palestinians over the West Bank.[58] The hilltop youth hold far more radical views than other settlers, as 73.5% of them see "deportation, revenge, and war" as the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[59] Inflammatory price-tag attacks on mosques and churches should be understood in this light, as the mayor of Jab'a observed in 2012 that previous violence had not targeted such sacred sites like his village's mosque, which was burned a second time on February 25, 2015.[60] When attackers set fire to the Jab'a mosque the first time, they spray-painted a number of threatening messages in Hebrew, including "The war has come."

The targeting of mosques and other holy sites is an intentional attempt to stir powerful emotions and impose costs far greater than the numbers and capabilities of the price-tag perpetrators would suggest. As Roger Petersen notes, political entrepreneurs like the hilltop youth can strategically use emotion to alter the opinions and behavior of actors on both sides of a conflict for their own ends. In this case, targeting sacred sites makes use of preexisting ethnic fear and hatred to spark calls for vengeance, conflict escalation, and the prevention of

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[54] Itamar Fleishman and Atila Shuplavi, "Beit El: Punctures to Zambish, Paint on Ardan's car", *Ynet*, June 18, 2012.

[55] Isabel Kershner, "Radical Settlers Take on Israel", *New York Times,* September 28, 2008.

[56] Ehud Sprinzak, *The Buds of the Politics of De-Legitimization in Israel 1967-1972*, (Jerusalem: Levi Eshkol Center, 1973), 25.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 137–68.

[59] Kaniel, (See note 41 above), 15.

[60] Abdul Karim Sharaf, Interview with Author, August 12, 2012.

cooperation.[61] Such inflammatory attacks thus represent a win-win from the perspective of the perpetrators. First, they threaten to spark a violent Palestinian response that the Israeli government wishes to avoid, providing yet another way that the threat of price-tag can deter outpost withdrawal. Second, to the extent conflict between the Palestinians and the settlers does break out, the hilltop youth know that the IDF will intervene on their side given its mission to protect Jewish Israelis in the West Bank.[62] The hilltop youth's position as a radical, weak, and thus risk-acceptant group means that it can and does effectively manipulate risk vis-à-vis a more risk-averse Israeli government and settler leadership that prefer to avoid large-scale conflicts with the Palestinians and international attention on the West Bank.

Reactions to Price-Tag

The Israeli and U.S. governments started to formally recognize that there was something different about price-tag around the time of the first Jab'a mosque attack in 2012. Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon called the attack "terrorism," while the Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Ya'alon decreed that those involved in price-tag attacks were part of an "unhallowed association" in Israel and in the West-Bank in July 2013.[63] The Israeli government has generally reserved this status for Palestinian and Muslim organizations, which make up 85 out of 87 such organizations, price-tag being only the second Jewish one.[64]

Not surprisingly, the Palestinian Authority (PA) also condemns price-tag, whose ends (expand Israeli settlements) and means (violently target Palestinians) directly threaten the well-being of the PA's people and its political power. For its part, the U.S. government labeled price-tag as "terrorism" in its "Country Reports on Terrorism 2011," and by 2013, the State Department dedicated a separate section to these attacks in the report.[65] On May 1, 2014 the New-York based Anti-Defamation League (ADL) strongly condemned price-tag attacks and called on the Israeli government to "enhance crackdown efforts" against them.[66]

Given that price-tag has received such widespread condemnation, one might expect there to have been an effective crackdown generating large numbers of arrests and indictments. The reality is precisely the opposite. Suspected perpetrators have only been identified in 13% of the incidents in our dataset and arrested in only 5%. As with settler violence in general, over 90% of investigations are closed without indictment.[67] The most high profile attack yet—the July 2015

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[61] Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, "The Causes of Vigilante Political Violence: The Case of Jewish Settlers," *Civil Wars* 6, no. 3 (2003): 9–30. Roger Petersen, *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[62] Although there was no campaign of mosque-burning by earlier settlers, Israeli security forces did arrest three separate Jewish groups that planned to blow up the Muslim site on the Temple Mount/Haram Ash-Sharif in Jerusalem, which would have had a similar impact of sparking a war in which the settlers would have found the IDF on their side. Naomi Gal-Or, "The Jewish Underground: Our Terrorism," (Tel-Aviv, Ha'Kibutz Ha'Meuhad: 1990), 32-33.

[63] Gili Cohen, "'Price-Tag" declared Unhallowed Association in the West-Bank as well," *Haaretz,* July 28, 2013.

[64] Israeli Ministry of Defense, *Declarations on Terrorist Organizations, Unhallowed Associations and Confiscations,* June 2014.

[65] Barak Ravid. "For First Time, U.S. State Department Defines Settler Violence as Terrorism." *Haaretz*, August 18, 2012; United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013.*

[66] Anti-Defamation League, *Press Release: ADL Says Israeli Government Must Crackdown against "Price Tag" Attacks*, May 1, 2014.

[67] Yesh Din, "Prosecution of Israeli Civilians Suspected of Harming Palestinians in the West Bank," May 2015.

arson in Duma that killed three Palestinian civilians—did not lead to an indictment for six months despite eyewitness Palestinian testimony and the IDF expressing certainty that it was 'Jewish terrorism' soon after the attack.[68] Two indicted hilltop youth now await trial, although their attorney claims that the confession "was extracted by force, with blows."[69]

It is not as if Israel's security services are unaware of the threat. On May 30, 2012, the head of Shabak, Yoram Cohen, briefed the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee. Cohen, whose organization's primary mission since 1967 has been to contain the Palestinian armed challenge to Israel, reviewed the threats posed to Israel by Hamas and the instability in the Arab world, but highlighted another threat to Israel: price-tag. Cohen was concerned that "the burning of mosques by Jewish youngsters wrecks significant damage on Israel both in the political context, as well as in the security context." Cohen explained that his agency was active in trying to end these acts and that "we will reduce the steps we are taking against these youngsters only if we have indications that their activity is declining."[70] Why then have the attacks continued? Despite public condemnations from politicians, price-tag has significant private support from individuals where it is needed most: in the settlements and in some of the security forces that protect them.

The hilltop youth currently find little public support for price-tag attacks among longtime settler leaders. This includes national-religious settlers that were involved in the past in attacks against Palestinians, such as Zambish Hever, who in 1984 was sentenced for a prison term for his role in the "Jewish Underground." After Hever's car was vandalized in a price-tag attack, Danny Dayan, chairman of the Yesha Council, claimed that such attacks were more dangerous to the settler movement than "Obama or Netanyahu or Barak" and criticized his fellow settlers for not doing enough to stop such attacks.[71] Elyakim Haetzni, one of the founding fathers of the settler movement in the West Bank, claimed "[Price-tag] is a primitive way of thinking that is more suited to prehistoric man, and that may even be an insult to the prehistoric man."[72]

Nonetheless, many settlers stay silent and some privately sympathize with the hilltop youth, while even those who publically condemn price-tag have largely not taken significant actions to prevent it. There is also evidence of growing frustration with the mainstream settlement leadership. In the northern West Bank in 2008, "settlers recently ousted their more mainstream representatives in local council elections, voting in what they called 'activist' mayors instead." One of those mayors, the Samaria council's Gershon Mesika, noted that "'We are taking our fate into our own hands,' Mr. Mesika said of the price-tag doctrine. 'We won't go like sheep to the slaughter.' He added that the recent settler violence was something he understood, though did not support."[73] Significant Israeli popular support for price-tag exists, especially in the aftermath of attacks by Palestinians—in March 2011, 46% of Israelis said they support price-tag after the killing of a family in the settlement of Itamar—and among the youth—in May 2015, only 28%

[68] The suspects lawyers claim that their admissions were gained under "IDF: Duma Attack Was Definitely 'Jewish Terrorism,'" *Times of Israel*, September 8, 2015.
[69] Isabel Kershner, "2 Israelis Charged in Deadly Attack on Palestinian Family in West Bank," *The New York Times*, January 3, 2016.
[70] Jonathan Lis, "The Head of the Shabak: We Prevented a Soldier's Abduction in the Last Minute," *Haaretz*, May 30, 2012.
[71] Chaim Levinson, "Settler Leader: Hilltop Youth More Dangerous to Settlements than Netanyahu, Barak," *Haaretz*, June 25, 2012.
[72] Nadav Shragai, "The Rising Cost of Price-Tag Attacks," *Israel Hayom*, October 14, 2011.
[73] Isabel Kershner, "Radical Settlers Take on Israel," *The New York Times*, September 25, 2008.

of Jewish Israeli teens said they condemn price-tag.[74] Such figures make it less likely that Israeli security forces will receive tips on perpetrators or face domestic pressure to apprehend them, hindering investigation and prevention of price-tag.

Price-tag is able to generate greater sympathy among those who agree with its ends because its means, while always violent, are rarely lethal. In fact, our dataset reveals that the Duma attack in July 2015 was the first price-tag incident to cause a single death, while 119 Palestinians were killed by settlers between 1987 and 2001.[75] Our dataset's stringent requirements for inclusion and reliance on newspaper reporting ensures that we undercount price-tag incidents overall, but we would be incredibly unlikely to miss fatal events that the media is very unlikely to overlook.[76] Why the discrepancy in lethality between price-tag and previous settler violence? First, while the mainstream national-religious settlers have access to legally obtained weapons, the hilltop youth have limited access to such arms. Second, the hilltop youth may well realize that killings are a red line, and that short of killing a Palestinian (and certainly an Israeli) they are unlikely to face serious repercussions for their actions.

Finally, price-tag perpetrators have been effective at carrying out attacks and avoiding repercussions because of a small but growing number of sympathizers in Israel's security forces themselves. After the price-tag attack on the Efraim Regional Brigade headquarters, the military police arrested Amichai Zoaretz, an IDF paratrooper, on suspicion of giving the attackers information about plans for dismantling the still-standing outpost of Migron nearby. On his Facebook page, Zoaretz previously had written "I've come to the conclusion that the Maccabees were today's 'price-tag'." On the day of the attack on the Efraim base, he wrote "Today they're going to evacuate our home on Hill 18. May the name of everyone who takes part in the eviction and destruction of the Land of Israel be blotted out!"[77] The potential for soldiers in the most elite units of the IDF to support and aid price-tag attacks—or refuse to assist in dismantling illegal outposts—highlights the challenges in stopping the phenomenon.

Price-Tag and the Israeli Settlers as a Social Movement

The dominant framework for analyzing the Israeli settlement movement is the literature on social movements. Michael Feige's foundational study of Gush Emunim and Peace Now (a left leaning Israeli social movement), begins with the clarification that "the first field of research" he employs in his project is "the study of social movements."[78] Moreover, scholars of social movements were quick to apply their frameworks to the Israeli settlement movement. Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow framed the internal conflict in Israel over the fate of the Gaza settlement project as "a social movement of Israeli settlers against the Israeli government."[79] The

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[74] Ynet, "Poll: 46% in Favor of 'Price Tag,'" *Ynet*, March 28, 2011; Avi Lewis and Gedalyah Reback, "Jewish Israeli Teens Lean Right, Many Support 'Price Tag,'" *The Times of Israel*, June 3, 2015.

[75] Peace Now, "Accomplices: Settler Violence against Palestinians under the Auspices of the Security Forces," June 6, 2001.

[76] 7% of price-tag attacks have wounded victims. For example, on August 16, 2012, a Palestinian taxi was attacked near the settlement of Bat Ayin with a fire bomb and six passengers were wounded.

[77] Gili Cohen and Chaim Levinson, "Soldier Suspected of Abetting Rightists Released from Detention," *Haaretz*, January 13, 2012.

[78] Michael Feige, *One Space, Two Places: Gush Emunim, Peace Now and the Construction of Israeli* Space, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002), 13 .

[79] Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, (Boulder CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 163.

case of the hilltop youth, including the violent acts unleashed by some of their members, demonstrates that social movements can benefit from an active flank that takes a more radical approach. Having an active radical flank provides an opportunity for the social movement, in this case the national-religious settlers, to secure gains from the state using a good cop/bad cop dynamic via a two-level game.[80]

Furthermore, the flank indirectly strengthens mainstream settler leaders. The latter appear moderate and responsible compared to members of the flank. For example, part of the law enforcement effort of the Israeli authorities against price-tag includes interaction between security officials and mainstream settler leaders.[81] This confers legitimacy on the political project of settling, which is still deeply contested in Israel, and allows for the settler leaders to portray themselves to the government and the Israeli public as assisting national security. Furthermore, the mainstream settlers can benefit by the deflection of attention from their incremental achievements (e.g. expanding existing settlements) due to the focus on the more radical steps taken by the flank. While the Israeli government and international community focus on stopping price-tag and removing some of the 100 or so outposts, the existing 121 settlements become less criticized and more accepted.

Price-tag has further implications for the comparative study of settlement projects in general[82], and the modern phenomenon in particular.[83] While much of the work in the field focuses on the state's role in directing the settlement projects, our study highlights the active role of the settlers themselves. In many modern cases of settlement activity, the level of settler activism is low and the focus of the analysis is state action.[84] This is most evident in Cyprus where the Turkish state—and to a lesser extent the Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic—drives settlement activity.[85] In the Israeli settler movement, however, the hilltop youth are active not only in creating settlements, but also in driving new mechanisms that are intended to protect the settlement project and ultimately determine its territorial reach. Further research on the effects of price-tag would benefit from analysis of these center-flank dynamics within its social movement.

Conclusion

Price-tag is a new form of political violence perpetrated by the hilltop youth in order to maintain Israeli territorial control in the West Bank. Price-tag initiates conflict with a right-wing Israeli government because, in the aftermath of settlement withdrawals by Likud prime ministers in Sinai, Gaza, and the West Bank, the hilltop youth perceive the government as the biggest threat to their enterprise, and they believe that the best way to succeed is through confrontation,

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[80] Herbert H. Haines, "Black Radicalization and the Funding of Civil Rights: 1957-1970," Social Problems 32, no. 1 (October 1, 1984): 31–43; Robert Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 427–60.

[81] Smutrich, Bezalel, "Price-tag is not terrorism", *Beshava*, December 10, 2015.

[82] Ian S. Lustick, *State Building Failure: in British Ireland and French Algeria*, (Berkeley: Berkley University Press, 1985), Ian S. Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain in Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West-Bank-Gaza*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[83] Oded Haklai and Neophytos Loizides (Eds.), Settlers in Contested Lands: Territorial Disputes and Ethnic Conflicts (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

[84] Ibid.

[85] A rare exception was the behavior of French settlers in Algeria, as the metropolis was preparing to withdraw in the early 1960s. Lustick, *Unsettled States*, *Disputed Land* (see note 81 above), 239-301.

not cooperation. Even though the objective is to influence the Israeli government, price-tag attackers predominantly strike Palestinian targets to triadically deter the government from withdrawing from outposts—by exacting a "price" in the form of West Bank instability—while simultaneously hitting targets that are unlikely to generate significant public backlash. The attacks are designed to help Israeli settlements, but existing settler leaders condemn price-tag because it challenges their cooperative approach with the Israeli government, and endangers the power they draw from portraying themselves as committed to the state and the Zionist endeavor.[86] Although the hilltop youth hold similar goals to their national-religious predecessors, price-tag reveals that they differ in their relationship with the Israeli state and their strategies for territorial control.

Analyzing the patterns that constitute price-tag violence is important beyond the significant threat it poses to the lives and livelihood of Palestinians and Israelis. The perpetrators of price-tag are playing with the fire of potential conflict with three adversaries simultaneously—the settler movement, the Israeli state, and the Palestinians—whose cross-cutting cleavages and alliances can set the stage for major new political developments.

First, price-tag attacks are unlikely to lead to a broader confrontation between the larger settler population and the state, at least in the near term. The mainstream national-religious settler leadership rejects the anti-statist ideology advanced by the attackers and the social circles that surround them in the hilltop youth. Indeed, national-religious elites are generally on the rise in Israel, as their members are disproportionately represented in its most important institutions, such as the Knesset and the armed forces. The current leader of the national-religious party, MK Naftali Bennett, even harbors an aspiration for the premiership. For these elites, the route for national leadership goes through the state, and not actions against it.

Second, price-tag attacks can spark civil tension and even conflict within the Israeli state. In addition to direct, violent encounters between Israeli citizens and security forces, price-tag and outpost construction plays into existing cleavages in the IDF, Israel's most cherished state institution. The IDF has dealt with increasing splits between secular and religious Israelis over conscription, training, and potential service in the West Bank. Some soldiers have refused to serve in the territory, while others—who often live there—have taken oaths to refuse to evacuate Jewish settlements from it. These tensions, which have already led to the selective deployment of units and concerns about intelligence leaks, can tear at the fabric of the IDF and threaten its effectiveness the longer that price-tag endures.

At the extreme, price-tag violence conjures up one of the ultimate Israeli fears: the horror of a possible civil war. Although a large-scale conflict is not currently on the horizon, Israeli leaders clearly recognize this potential danger from price-tag. On June 10, 2012, Prime Minister Netanyahu stated in a national memorial service for the Altalena Affair—when members of the Zionist militia Irgun faced off against the fledging IDF on the beaches of Tel Aviv—that during the event, "[Menachem] Begin set a clear and simple principal – there will not be a war between brothers, he knew that such a war will bring an end to the Jewish state."[87] Hinting at recent threats from settler activists to use violence if the state attempted to remove the unauthorized settlement of Giva'at Ha'Ulpana, the Prime Minister added that Begin's "principle was in force

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[86] Barak Mendlshon, "State Authority in the Balance: The Israeli State and the Messianic Settler Movement", *International Studies Review* 16 no. 4: 499-521.

[87] This June 22, 1948 clash between the nascent Israeli military and an armed Jewish group (the Irgun) killed 19 people. The leader of the Etzel (and later Prime Minister) Menachem Begin famously withdrew his forces (who were greatly outnumbered), stating that he wanted to avoid a civil war.

for 64 years and is in force today."[88] For years, scholars have warned that settler violence in the West Bank poses a threat "to Israel's character, and even its existence."[89] Price-tag represents a new twist on this old challenge.

Third, as both Israeli and Palestinian leaders have noted on multiple occasions, price-tag attacks can spark a larger conflict with Palestinians and perhaps a third intifada. Both the first and second intifadas were ignited by a small-scale single violent event: a car accident near Gaza in December 1987 and a clash between police and civilians on the Temple Mount/Haram Ash-Sharif following a visit of Ariel Sharon in October 2000. Although most price-tag attacks are directed against personal property, those that target sacred religious sites or harm civilians can provide a spark for broader conflict. Indeed, some of the attackers in the wave of Palestinian violence in the fall of 2015 indicated that they were motivated by the price-tag attack in Duma that led to the deaths of the Dawabshe family.[90]

The structural conditions for another round of violence in the West-Bank, Gaza, and Israel are in place. Most notably, the absence of any political process to assign political rights to the Palestinians in the West-Bank, the Israeli-Egyptian blockade on Gaza, and a growing sense of alienation between the state of Israel and its Palestinian-Arab citizens. Although no one can know the outcome of such a conflict, a number of significant political changes could result. Such a conflict could lead to the downfall of the Palestinian Authority, increases or decreases in Israeli settlements, unilateral Israeli withdrawal from—or annexation of—parts of the West Bank, and international intervention and negotiations that yield a new status quo. Needless to say, most Israeli and Palestinian leaders seek to avoid being chain-ganged into such a conflict, in part because it threatens their current hold on power. Indeed, price-tag has increasingly driven a wedge between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its people, rather than bringing them together against a common threat. Palestinian civilians feel unprotected in the face of this new onslaught, and so have begun to form neighborhood watches to ensure their security. A growing plurality supports the dissolution of the Palestinian Authority, and to the extent price-tag helps to spark a third intifada, the PA may be one of its earliest casualties.[91]

What are the broader implications of these developments for Israeli-Palestinian relations? Price-tag violence poses a threat to a possible two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Price-tag and outpost construction thus represent forms of preemptive spoiling, in which their very presence makes serious negotiations between Israeli and Palestinians unlikely to begin, let alone be concluded successfully. This is indeed the main innovation of price-tag: moving from reaction to prevention, from compelling the termination of an agreed-to deal to deterring the negotiation and completion of a potential one. By advancing the front lines of the struggle over time (earlier in the process) and space (deeper into the West Bank) they make conflict more likely and a two-state solution less likely. With so many obstacles to a deal already in place, even a modest raising of the "price" for each of the involved actors can make such a solution impossible, with serious ramifications for Israelis, Palestinians, and the broader Middle East.

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[88] Tal Shalev, "Netanyahu: In Israel, Everybody has to Abide by the Law", *Wallanews.com*, June 10, 2012.

[89] Moshe Amon, "Can Israel Survive the West Bank Settlements?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 1 (2004): 48–65.

[90] Sharon Pulwer, "Henkin Murders Were Revenge for Fatal West Bank Arson Attack, Shooters Confess," *Haaretz*, November 3, 2015.

[91] "What Is the Palestinian Authority For?," *The Economist*, August 5, 2015.