



Groups and Valuations: Group Affiliation and the Acceptability of Trade-offs after Violent Conflict.

Question: How is the acceptability of economic tradeoffs affected by the group affiliation of others after violent conflict?

After violent intergroup conflict, the ability of people to engage in economic and political transactions is imperative for functional post-conflict societies. In such settings, former enemies will need to not only live side by side, but also interact with each other.

Latent threat and legacies of conflict may affect the decision making processes in interpersonal interactions.

Much of the research on economic preferences has focused on pro-social preferences and altruism. However, the willingness to engage in economic transaction or even bargaining has been less studied.

Further, many of the studies on pro-sociality after conflict have focused on relations in the ingroup, but more rarely have attitudes and behaviour towards the outgroups that were the antagonists in the conflict been studied (Bauer et al. 2016).

This paper addresses this gap by investigating how individuals evaluate trade-offs with ingroup and outgroup members after violent intergroup conflict.

Methods

I conduct survey experiment with a sample of Sunni Arab refugees (N=1685) from the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Iraq currently residing in Turkey. The experiment was embedded in a larger survey.

Participants evaluate hypothetical tradeoffs where another person makes a claim to their phone (worth 600 Turkish Lira), but offers some compensation. The subjects evaluated several tradeoffs, both above and below the reference value.

The group identity of the other person is randomly assigned as either of the two main ethnoreligious groups in the current conflict in the Middle East.

		Reference Value	
		Above	Below
Group Affiliation	Ingroup	Sunni Arab, Gain domain	Sunni Arab, Loss domain
	Outgroup	Shia Arab, Gain domain	Shia Arab, Loss domain

Fig. 1. Illustration of the experimental design. Group affiliation is a between subject factor and reference value a within subject factor.

Results

As expected, there is higher acceptance in gain domain than in loss domain. However, the size of this difference is driven by group affiliation. The outgroup treatment leads to significantly lower acceptance in loss domain, significantly higher acceptance in gain domain compared to the ingroup treatment (fig 2).

As a follow-up analysis, I test the role of exposure to harm from the outgroup in driving differing attitudes to tradeoffs. Including a dummy for above or below mean exposure to violence from the outgroup (Shia Arabs) as well as the group affiliation treatment, I run 2x2 ANOVAs. Background and demographic factors are also included to control for individual differences in outgroup harm.

Results reveal that the effects are primarily driven by those with high outgroup harm (fig 3). Acceptance was generally low in the low harm group. The group treatment had no effect in the low harm group. In the high harm group, on the other hand, acceptance increased both in loss and gain domain for the ingroup, but only in the gain domain for the outgroup.

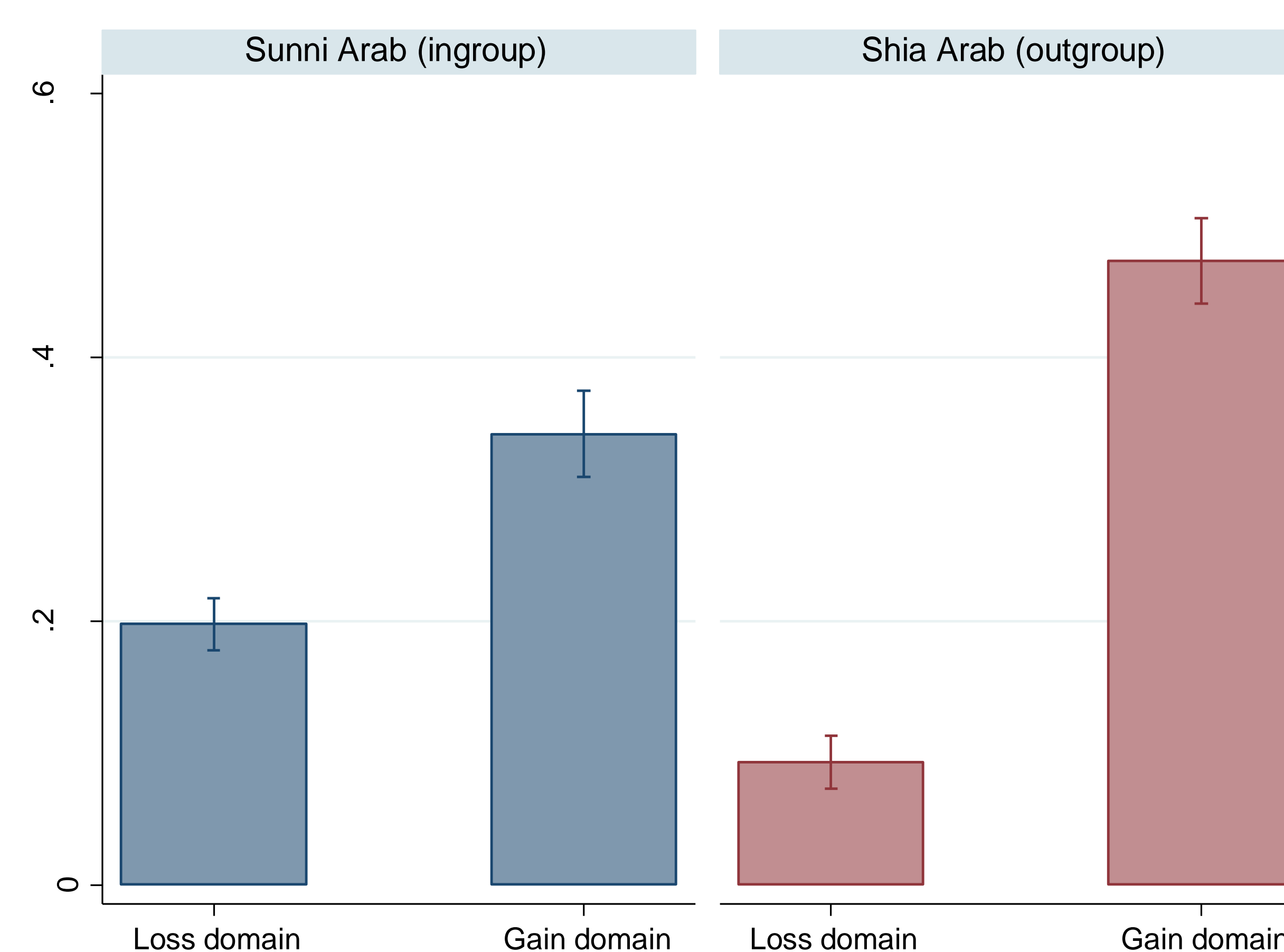


Fig. 2. Acceptability for ingroup and outgroup treatments.

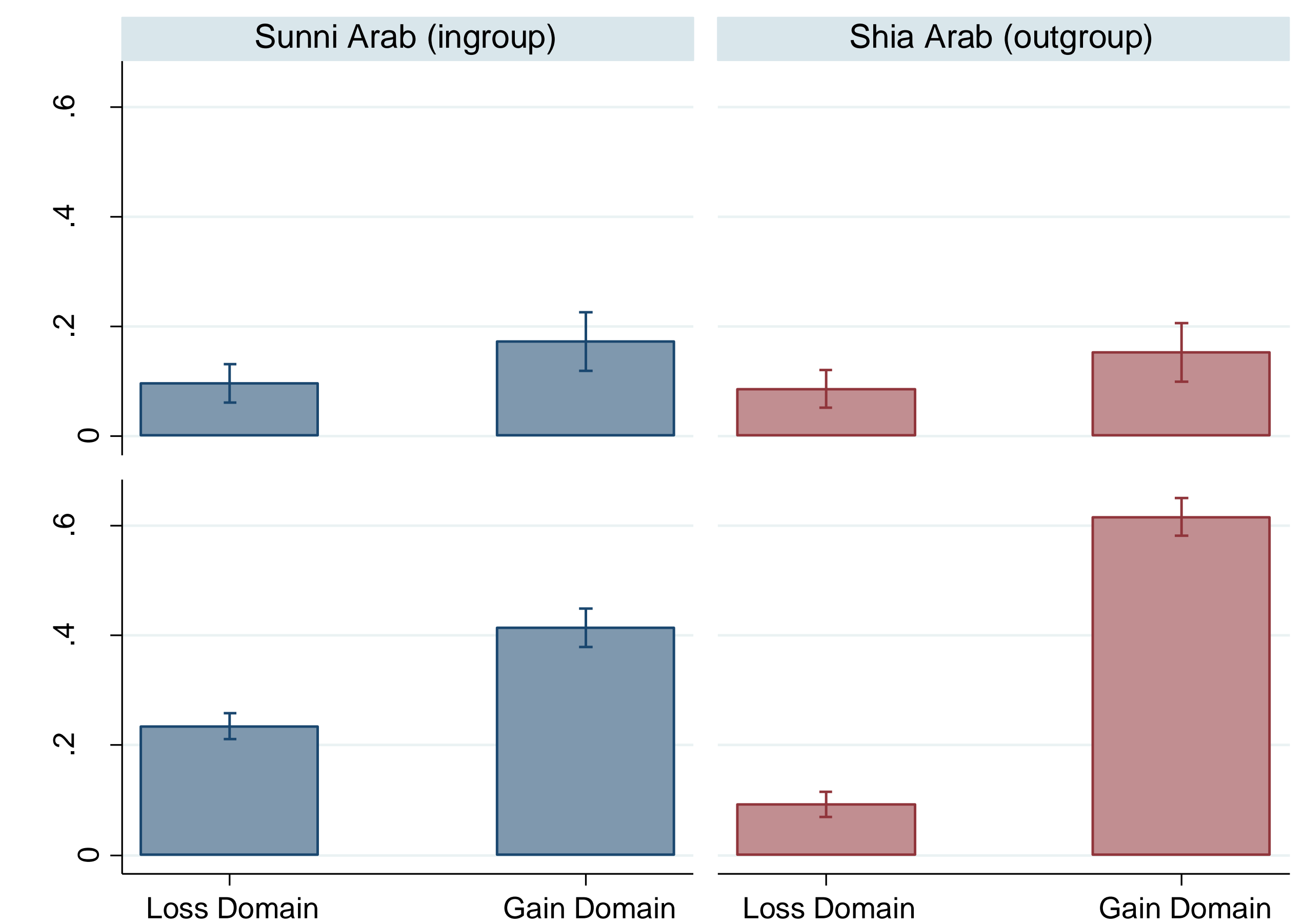


Fig. 3. Acceptability for ingroup and outgroup treatments over exposure to outgroup harm.

Conclusions

The experiment revealed strong effects of both tradeoff domain and the group affiliation of the other party.

Results seem in line with a stronger "communal sharing" tradeoff paradigm in the ingroup, and a "market pricing" paradigm in the outgroup (Fiske & Tetlock 1997, Rai & Fiske 2011).

The effects are primarily driven by those who experienced violence at the hands of members of the other group. Whereas acceptance was in general low for those less exposed, outgroup harm increased acceptability across the board, except for loss domain tradeoffs with outgroup members.

The increased acceptability seems in line with previous research showing increased pro-sociality after exposure to conflict. However, the effect of outgroup harm is robust when controlling for individual levels of exposure to trauma in the conflict using a Harvard Trauma Questionnaire.

Economic interactions between groups that were enemies is important and necessary for reconciliation and rebuilding after conflict. These results suggest that while exposure to intergroup violence does affect attitudes towards tradeoffs with outgroup members, it does not necessarily lead to outright discrimination or reluctance to accept tradeoffs. However, it shows that group affiliation of others affect the value of the tradeoff.