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### Threat by association

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*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*  
2016

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Bouman, T. (2016). *Threat by association: how distant events can affect local intergroup relations*. [Thesis fully internal (DIV), University of Groningen]. University of Groningen.

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# Chapter 3

## When foreign threats turn domestic:

*Two ways for distant realistic intergroup threats to carry over into local intolerance*

This chapter is based on Bouman, T., Van Zomeren, M., & Otten, S. (2015). When threats foreign turn domestic: Two ways for distant realistic intergroup threats to carry over into local intolerance. *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, 54, 581-600.  
doi:10.1111/bjso.12098



In times of global economic downturn, realistic intergroup threats (Stephan & Renfro, 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 2000) seem prevalent throughout society and dominate political and media discourse. Although such threats may be perceived to originate from ‘local’ outgroups (e.g., competition caused by labour immigrants, referred to here as *local* realistic threats), they can also be perceived to emanate from more ‘distant’ outgroups (e.g., competition with other nations, referred to here as *distant* realistic threats). Indeed, people typically become more prejudiced toward the group that is believed to cause the threat (e.g., Riek et al., 2006). Furthermore, they also become more prejudiced toward *local* outgroups when distant threats *carry over* into local intolerance (Bouman, Van Zomeren, & Otten, 2014). The latter is an important insight because it suggests that local intolerance can be due to, so to speak, threats foreign and domestic.

Carry-over effects of distant threats have been found for symbolic threats (e.g., Bouman et al., 2014), which concern the perception that ingroup values and ideologies are threatened by an outgroup. For instance, Bouman and colleagues (2014, Study 2 and 3) found that presenting Dutch students with symbolic threats from Turkey’s EU candidacy (e.g., differences in religion and culture) resulted in stronger intolerance toward the local Moroccan-Dutch citizens. Most likely, these carry-over effects occurred because participants perceived both outgroups as ‘Muslim’ and therefore as supporting the same stereotypical values and ideologies. *Distant realistic threats*, however, are about outgroup actions (e.g., competition) and thus cannot psychologically link the distant and local outgroups in this direct manner.

In this chapter we therefore suggest two ways by which distant realistic threats may carry over more *indirectly* into local intolerance. First, the *group-based association pathway* (GAP, Figure 3.1, top) describes how *direct* reactions to the distant outgroup posing the threat (e.g., intolerance toward Turks due to perceived negative economic consequences of a Turkish accession to the EU) generalize to local outgroups already perceived as similar to the distant outgroup (e.g., Moroccan-Dutch citizens). The *threat-based association pathway* (TAP, Figure 3.1, bottom) describes how

distant realistic threats might alert individuals about other realistic threats from local outgroups (e.g., threats from labour immigrants) and influence intolerance toward these local outgroups. We tested the empirical viability of these pathways in two studies that aimed to answer the questions *whether* and *how* realistic distant threats carry over into local intolerance.

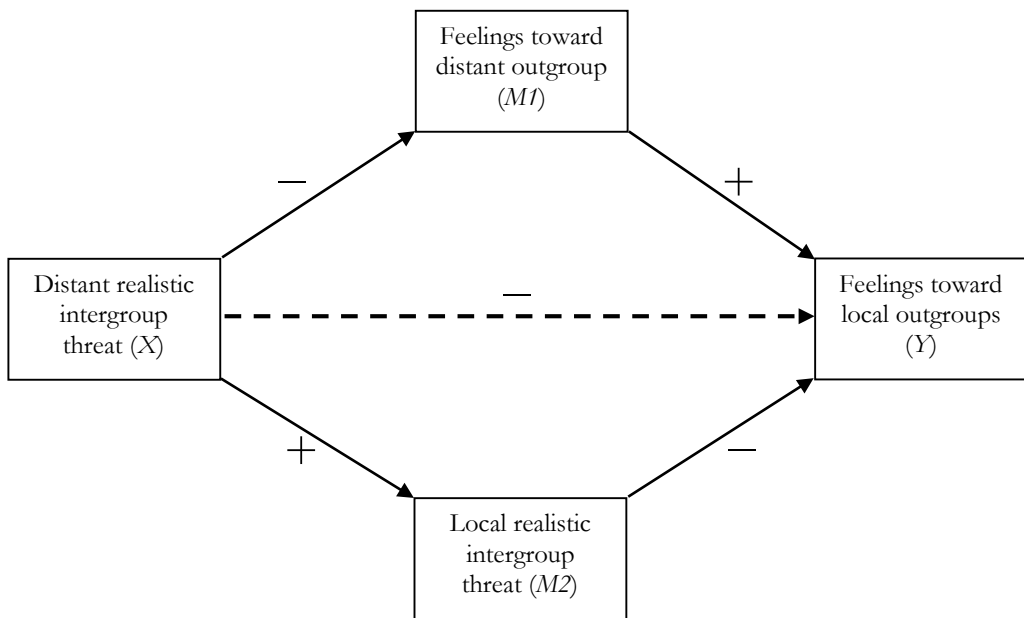


Figure 3.1. Full model of the effect of distant realistic intergroup threat ( $X$ ) on feelings toward local outgroups ( $Y$ ), with the mediators feelings toward distant outgroup ( $M1$ , GAP) and local realistic intergroup threat ( $M2$ , TAP). Paths  $b$  and  $c$  (i.e., group-based association) belong to the GAP, and paths  $d$  (i.e., threat-based association) and  $e$  belong to the TAP.

### **Carry-over effects of realistic intergroup threats**

Realistic intergroup threats concern perceived harm to the ingroup's possessions caused by an outgroup (Stephan & Renfro, 2002; Stephan et al., 2009), such as harm to the ingroup's economic resources or power. Realistic group conflict theory (Sherif, 1966) posits that intergroup competition likely results in negative attitudes toward the competitor (e.g., Citrin et al., 1997; Esses et al., 2001; King et al., 2010; Minescu & Poppe, 2011). Similarly, relative deprivation theory (Pettigrew et al., 2008) and the relative group position model (Blumer, 1958; Bobo, 1999) indicate realistic threats' negative influence on individuals' perceptions of the threatening outgroup. In line with these theories, meta-analytic findings suggest that realistic intergroup threats predict intolerance of the outgroup (Riek et al., 2006).

However, this research does not move beyond studying direct reactions toward the outgroup perceived as threatening (e.g., immigrants; Stephan et al., 2005). Little is known yet about whether and how realistic threats from *distant* outgroups carry over into *local* intolerance. This is important because (a) distant threats are frequently presented in the media, and (b) the existence of carry-over effects would indicate the relevance of such distant intergroup situations for local intergroup relations (Bouman et al., 2014). Although we believe that both realistic and symbolic intergroup threats can carry over, research has focused on symbolic threats (Bouman et al., 2014). When people perceive distant symbolic threats, they feel threatened by the distant outgroup's values and ideologies, and the exact same values and ideologies could also be perceived as central to local outgroups, making carry-over effects likely.

This reasoning does not apply to realistic threats. Because responses to realistic threats are generally aimed at removing the threat (Esses et al., 1998), individuals are likely to respond in a threat-oriented way within this specific intergroup context, rather than to other (uninvolved) outgroups. Nonetheless, distant realistic threats might carry over *indirectly* into local intolerance. That is, immediate outcomes of the distant realistic threat might in turn influence intolerance toward local

outgroups. Yet, it remains important that somewhere in this indirect process the distant situation becomes psychologically connected to the local outgroups. There are at least two aspects of the threatening situation that could foster such a connection: (a) The distant outgroup responsible for the threat (which relates to the GAP), and (b) the distant threat itself (which relates to the TAP).

**GAP.** As portrayed in Figure 3.1 (top), individuals' perception of a distant realistic intergroup threat causes intolerance toward the threatening distant outgroup (path *b*). These feelings of intolerance toward the distant outgroup affect how local outgroups are perceived (path *c*, the group-based association). For instance, Western-European media have often blamed Greece and its citizens for the 'Eurozone crisis' (i.e., the debt crisis within the Eurozone; e.g., Antoniadis, 2012; Tzogopoulos, 2013) and, accordingly, to pose realistic threats to EU citizens. These perceptions of threat might result in negative views toward Greeks, which may influence feelings toward Mediterranean immigrants living in Western Europe.

Many studies support the effects of realistic threats on intolerance toward the threatening outgroup (Riek et al., 2006). Furthermore, attitudes toward one object can generalize toward other objects (e.g., Walther, 2002), and this process also applies to groups (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew, 2009; Tausch et al., 2010). For instance, intergroup contact with one outgroup can also affect attitudes toward other uninvolved outgroups (i.e., secondary transfer effect; Pettigrew, 2009). One explanation for these generalizations is that observers perceive both outgroups as similar on for instance culture, stereotype content, or social stigma (Harwood, Paolini, Joyce, Rubin, & Arroyo, 2011; Lolliot et al., 2012; Pettigrew, 2009; Van Laar, Levin, Sinclair, & Sidanius, 2005)<sup>1</sup>. Although such generalizations have mainly been studied within positive intergroup contact (Tausch et al., 2010), we believe that negative

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<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge that similarities based on culture/ethnicity could be considered symbolic and thus be confused with symbolic threats. However, within the proposed framework symbolic characteristics cause the association, whereas realistic threats cause the negative feelings that are generalized toward groups. Therefore, symbolic similarities are not necessarily threatening or related to the threat.

generalizations toward other outgroups also occur. In fact, Shook, Fazio, and Eiser (2007) found that negative and extreme attitudes toward objects are generalized most strongly. Thus, we predict that one indirect way in which distant realistic threats carry over into local intolerance is via evaluative reactions toward the distant outgroup (i.e., the GAP-hypothesis). That is, the stronger observers react with intolerance toward the distant outgroup as a function of its perceived distant threat, the more intolerant these observers will be toward similarly perceived local outgroups.

**TAP.** As portrayed in Figure 3.1 (bottom), individuals may perceive local realistic threats because the distant threat alerts them to such local threats (path *d*, the threat-based association). For instance, in the context of the role of Greece in the Eurozone crisis, Dutch individuals might be alerted about realistic threats from Polish labour migrants because this group might be perceived as representing competition on the local dimension (Pijpers, 2006). These individuals' perceptions of local threats may result in intolerance toward this local outgroup (path *e*, e.g., toward Polish labour immigrants). However, little is known about the threat-based association itself. One way in which such a threat-based association could occur is due to the activation of a competition mindset (Sassenberg et al., 2007). Indeed, a competitive situation might activate a mindset that makes people prone to react toward potential competitors in general. Importantly, whereas Sassenberg and colleagues activated a local threat, we focus on *distant* threats. Thus, the TAP proposes that perceived distant threats alert individuals about potential threats from local outgroups, and these local threats cause intolerance toward the involved local outgroups, constituting a second indirect way in which distant realistic threats may carry over into local intolerance.

### **Predictions and overview of studies**

We analytically distinguished between two psychological pathways. The first pathway — the GAP — proposes that distant threats influence attitudes toward the distant group causing the threat, which in turn influences intolerance toward local



outgroups associated with the distant outgroup. In the second pathway — the TAP — distant and local threats are positively associated with each other, and these activated local realistic threats influence intolerance toward the now threatening local outgroup.

The main aim of this research was to test whether we could identify those assumed pathways in two studies using different contexts. Study 3.1 tested these ideas in the context of Turkey's potential inclusion in the European Union (EU), whereas Study 3.2 followed-up on the Study 3.1 findings in the context of perceived economic threats from Greece. Both contexts afforded a focus on distant realistic intergroup threats, but differed in how the distant outgroup relates to local outgroups in the Dutch society. The two largest minority groups in the Netherlands, Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens (CBS, 2014), are clearly culturally related to Turkey. Accordingly, the context of Study 3.1 seems well-suited to test the occurrence of carry-over effects via the GAP. For the Greek context, such associations are much weaker. Therefore, Study 3.2 provides a more neutral context in which to test both pathways.

### Study 3.1

#### Method

In Study 3.1, we chose Turkey's potential inclusion in the EU as our research context for three main reasons. Firstly, the same context was successfully employed by Bouman and colleagues (2014, Study 2 and 3) to manipulate the salience of realistic and symbolic threats. Secondly, it is likely that a group-based association exists between the distant outgroup held responsible for the threat (i.e., Turks) and the local outgroups Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens because many native Dutch citizens perceive them as sharing religious views, culture, and way of living (e.g., Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2012; Van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998). Thirdly, a threat-based association might also be present for Polish-Dutch citizens. Although Poland became

an EU member in 2004, there is still much debate on the influence of Poland and its citizens on the EU economy. For instance, Poland has been portrayed as causing unfair competition due to cheap labour costs and causing economic mass migration to better-off EU members (e.g., Alonso, 2011; Pijpers, 2006; Van Haastrecht, 2007). Accordingly, we predicted that realistic threats from the Turkish accession would influence intolerance toward Turkish-, Moroccan-, and Polish-Dutch citizens, but for different reasons. Whereas intolerance toward Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens may be based on a group-based association (GAP-hypothesis), intolerance toward Polish-Dutch citizens may be based in a threat-based association (TAP-hypothesis).

**Participants and design.** Ninety-nine native Dutch undergraduate students (77% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 21$  years) participated in the study and were compensated with partial fulfilment of a course requirement. We manipulated the salience of distant realistic and symbolic threats by presenting these threats in a (fictitious) newspaper article, resulting in a 2 realistic threat (salient versus not salient) x 2 symbolic threat (salient versus not salient) experimental design. Note that we included the symbolic threat salience manipulation to isolate realistic threats from symbolic ones, and to see whether we could replicate the earlier findings of Bouman and colleagues (2014) in the current context.

**Materials and procedure.** The salience of distant realistic and the salience of symbolic threats were manipulated in a newspaper article about whether Turkey should be granted EU membership. We chose this type of manipulation because research indicated its effectiveness in activating the salience of perceived intergroup threats (Bouman et al., 2014; Esses et al., 1998; Jackson & Esses, 2000; Maddux et al., 2008). Participants first read that a majority of the EU citizens is opposed to the Turkish accession. Thereafter, a paragraph was shown in which — depending on the experimental condition — the threats were presented. When *symbolic threats* were salient, this paragraph stated that many EU citizens are opposed to the Turkish accession because they feel threatened by Turkey's values and ideologies and Turkey's influence on the EU image and culture. When *realistic threats* were salient, this

paragraph stated that many EU citizens are opposed to the Turkish accession because they feel threatened by Turkey's (presumed) weak economy, the costs of its accession, and the high power Turkey would get within the EU democracy. When both realistic and symbolic threats were salient the article first reported on symbolic and thereafter on realistic threats. In the *control condition*, participants started with the questionnaire on local attitudes, after which they completed the measures about Turkey's accession.

**Comprehension check.** Immediately after the newspaper article was presented, two open-ended questions checked whether participants had accurately read the article. The first question asked what the main message of the article was about, whereas the second question asked what the participant thought was the most important part of the article. All participants' answers corresponded to the manipulated newspaper article.

**Manipulation check.** Participants were asked to indicate how strongly (1 *completely disagree* and 7 *completely agree*) they perceived Turkey to be symbolically threatening (3 items: Turks have different norms and values than native Dutch citizens, Turkish citizens are less attached to the European laws and constitutions, Turkey's accession is at the expense of the EU culture;  $\alpha = .76$ ,  $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) and realistically threatening (3 items: Turkey will have too much power in the EU, Turkey will be too dominant in EU politics, Too much money will be spent on Turkey;  $\alpha = .69$ ,  $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ). Note that this manipulation check was a conservative one as it was included at the end of the questionnaire to prevent it from influencing any effects of our manipulation.

**Feelings toward Turkey and its accession (mediators).** Two feeling thermometers asked participants about their feelings toward Turkey and its citizens (0 *negative* or *cold* and 100 *positive* or *warm*,  $r = .66$ ,  $M = 57.90$ ,  $SD = 16.77$ ). In addition, one item measured participants' feelings toward Turkey's accession (0 *negative* and 100 *positive*;  $M = 38.29$ ,  $SD = 17.74$ ).

**Feelings toward local groups (main outcome variables).** Similar feeling thermometers were used to measure feelings toward the local outgroups Turkish-

Dutch citizens,  $r = .85$ ,  $M = 53.36$ ,  $SD = 19.35$ , Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $r = .90$ ,  $M = 43.89$ ,  $SD = 21.41$ , Polish-Dutch citizens,  $r = .78$ ,  $M = 50.85$ ,  $SD = 18.09$ , and the ingroup native Dutch citizens<sup>2</sup>,  $r = .77$ ,  $M = 69.43$ ,  $SD = 12.96$ . Based on stereotypes about each of these local outgroups, we expected distant threats to influence feelings toward Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens via the GAP and feelings toward Polish-Dutch citizens via the TAP.

We further included exploratory measures at the end of the questionnaire on the relationship between Turkish-Dutch citizens and native Dutch citizens and asked about details of the local outgroups. However, because both threats had already been discussed when these items were presented (which invalidates our manipulation at this point), we decided to drop these items from the current analyses.

## Results

**Effectiveness of manipulation.** We performed a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) including the two experimental factors and their interaction effect as predictors and either perceived realistic or perceived symbolic threat as dependent measure. As expected, participants perceived more realistic threats from Turkey in the conditions in which realistic threats were made salient,  $M_{\text{difference}} = 0.82$ ,  $F(1,95) = 18.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .16$ ; there was neither a significant main nor interaction effect for the manipulation of symbolic threat on perceived realistic threats,  $F_s < 1$ . Thus, our key manipulation was effective.

For symbolic threats, there was a slight trend that participants perceived somewhat more symbolic threats from Turkey in the conditions in which symbolic threats were salient, but this difference was not reliable,  $M_{\text{difference}} = 0.34$ ,  $F(1,95) = 2.52$ ,  $p = .116$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .03$ , neither was the main effect of realistic threat salience,  $M_{\text{difference}} =$

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<sup>2</sup> We included a measure of feelings toward the ingroup because people sometimes respond to threats by rating their ingroup more favorably (e.g., Stephan et al., 2009). However, results did not indicate such an effect ( $F_s < 1$ ).

0.27,  $F(1,95) = 1.50$ ,  $p = .224$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .02$ , and their interaction,  $F(1,95) = 3.09$ ,  $p = .082$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .03$ . Accordingly, our manipulation of distant symbolic threat salience was unsuccessful. Nonetheless, we included the manipulated symbolic threat salience and its interaction with realistic threat salience in all following analyses to control for any possible influence<sup>3</sup>.

**Feelings toward Turkey and its accession.** A MANOVA on feelings toward Turkey and Turkey's accession indicated a significant multivariate effect of the manipulation of realistic threat salience,  $F(2, 94) = 3.08$ ,  $p = .050$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .06$ . Univariate effects showed that participants' attitudes toward Turkey's accession became more negative,  $M_{\text{difference}} = -8.58$ ,  $F(1,95) = 6.16$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .06$ , but did not reliably affect feelings toward Turkey,  $M_{\text{difference}} = -4.69$ ,  $F(1,95) = 2.09$ ,  $p = .15$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .02$ .

**Feelings toward local outgroups.** Another MANOVA showed a marginal significant effect of realistic threat salience from the distant outgroup Turkey on feelings toward the local outgroups,  $F(3, 93) = 2.434$ ,  $p = .070$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .07$ . Univariate effects indicated that the salience of realistic threats from Turkey caused more negative feelings toward Turkish-Dutch citizens,  $M_{\text{difference}} = -9.15$ ,  $F(1, 95) = -5.67$ ,  $p = .019$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .06$ , and Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $M_{\text{difference}} = -10.99$ ,  $F(1,95) = -6.78$ ,  $p = .011$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .07$ ; but did not significantly alter feelings toward Polish-Dutch citizens,  $M_{\text{difference}} = 4.03$ ,  $F(1,95) = 1.21$ ,  $p = .275$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .01$ . Accordingly, these effects are in line with the GAP-hypothesis rather than with the TAP-hypothesis.

**Analyses on the process behind carry-over effects.** We also included a potential GAP-mediator to inspect the process more thoroughly: feelings toward

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<sup>3</sup> The symbolic manipulation and the interaction did not affect any of the dependent measures (multivariate  $F$ s < 1.00, univariate  $F$ s < 1.30) and are therefore not reported further (results are available upon request). Nevertheless, in line with earlier findings (Bouman et al., 2014), the measure of perceived symbolic threats correlated significantly with feelings toward Turkish-Dutch citizens,  $r = -.55$ ,  $p < .001$ , Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $r = -.39$ ,  $p < .001$ , and Polish-Dutch citizens,  $r = -.21$ ,  $p < .038$ .

Turks in Turkey. However, the effect of our manipulation on this mediator was not reliable. Nonetheless, the association between feelings toward Turks in Turkey and feelings toward the local outgroups followed the expected pattern. Feelings toward Turks was associated most strongly with Turkish-Dutch citizens,  $r = .61, p < .001$ , followed by Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $r = .46, p < .001$ , and to a lesser extent toward Polish-Dutch citizens,  $r = .32, p = .001$ . Accordingly, the association between feelings toward Turks in Turkey and similarly perceived local outgroups indicated the possibility of a group-based association.

We reasoned that one potential reason for why our realistic threat salience manipulation did not alter mean-level feelings toward the distant outgroup itself was that participants were far removed from the distant outgroup. This remoteness could have resulted in less emotional, more concrete, and threat-oriented reactions; much like the effect on feelings toward the Turkish accession. In fact, exploratory bootstrapping mediation analyses using the SPSS PROCESS macro with 5000 bootstrapping samples (Hayes, 2013, model 4) indicated that feelings toward the Turkish accession mediated the relationship between our manipulation and feelings toward the local outgroups (see Table 3.1). The indirect effect was significant for Turkish-Dutch citizens,  $q = -3.79, 95\%CI [-7.95, -1.07]$ , Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $q = -3.02, 95\%CI [-7.31, -0.50]$ , and Polish-Dutch citizens,  $q = -2.41, 95\%CI [-5.53, -0.58]$ .

## Discussion

Study 3.1 showed that making realistic threats from a distant outgroup salient led participants to perceive more realistic threats from the distant outgroup, become more unfavourable toward the distant group, and become more intolerant toward local outgroups. Unfortunately, our manipulation of distant symbolic threat salience did not alter perceived symbolic threats, which prohibited us to explicitly compare any effects of realistic and symbolic threat salience. One explanation for this could be

found in our focus on real-life situations and the relatively high level of perceived symbolic threats throughout our experimental conditions. As previously suggested by Bouman and colleagues (2014), when people already perceive such threats strongly, making such threats salient might *affirm* their perception rather than *strengthen* it. This may explain why the symbolic threat salience manipulation was not successful — it was already salient across conditions.

Our analyses also confirmed that perceived distant realistic threats indirectly influenced local intolerance. Although the intended GAP-mediator feelings toward Turkey did not reliably mediate the relationship between our manipulation and local feelings, individuals' feelings toward the Turkish accession did. Moreover, based on prior knowledge about the distant and local outgroups, our results suggest that realistic threats can carry over toward local outgroups associated with the distant outgroup itself (i.e., group-based association; Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens) or its threat (i.e., threat-based association; Polish-Dutch citizens). Clearly, however, more evidence is needed to examine the GAP and TAP. Study 2 was designed to further test these processes.

**Table 3.1.**

*Model coefficients for the indirect influence of distant realistic threat (X) on feelings toward Turkish-Dutch citizens, Moroccan-Dutch citizens, and Polish-Dutch citizens via the mediator feelings toward the Turkish accession (M1).*

	Feelings toward Turkish-Dutch c.			Feelings toward Moroccan-Dutch c.			Feelings toward Polish-Dutch c.		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Distant threat (X)	-5.40	3.60	.137	-8.09	4.14	.053	-1.70	3.63	.640
Feelings Turkish accession (M1)	0.44	0.10	.001	0.35	0.12	.003	0.28	0.10	.007
	$R^2 = .21,$ $F(2, 96) = 12.83,$ $p < .001$			$R^2 = .15,$ $F(2, 96) = 8.34,$ $p < .001$			$R^2 = .09,$ $F(2, 96) = 4.44,$ $p = .014$		

### Study 3.2

Study 3.2 used an ongoing discussion within the Netherlands about the perceived influence of Greece on the EU economy. The main goal of Study 3.2 was to test the GAP and TAP. Accordingly, we included feelings toward Greece (i.e., the GAP-mediator) and realistic threats from local outgroups (i.e., the TAP-mediator). In addition, because Study 3.1 only indicated weak indirect effects for the TAP, we chose to further investigate this pathway. Specifically, we manipulated whether the realistic threats were attributed *internally* to the distant outgroup members, or *externally* to the situation.

We predict the presence of a threat-based association when the threat is attributed *internally* to the distant outgroup members because such internal characteristics could easily be represented within the nearby society and thus alert observers about potential threats from local outgroups. Indeed, observers often blame outgroup members for the threatening actions (Bilewicz & Krzemiński, 2010; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Glick, 2005). In contrast to internally attributed threats, we predict that when the threat is attributed to the situation, the threat becomes very specific. Thereby, the threat gets isolated from other threats, obstructing a threat-based association. Accordingly, we predicted a moderating role of threat attribution on the association between the distant and local threats. When attributed internally (i.e., to the outgroup members), the distant threat is likely associated with local threats; yet when attributed externally (i.e., to the situation), no such threat-based association should occur.

### Method

**Participants and design.** Seventy Dutch psychology students participated (79% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 19$  years) in the study entitled “the Netherlands and the economic crisis” for partial fulfilment of a course requirement. Participants were



randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions in which threats from Greece were either attributed internally to characteristics of Greeks ( $n = 38$ ) or attributed more externally ( $n = 32$ )<sup>4</sup>.

**Materials and procedure.** After agreeing on informed consent, participants received (bogus) information on why Greece poses a threat to the European and Dutch economy. In addition, depending on the experimental condition, they received information on why Greece is specifically responsible for this threat. After reading the information, participants filled out a questionnaire on the economic crisis and Greece (i.e., the distant measures). Afterwards, they were asked to fill out another — ostensibly unrelated — questionnaire on Dutch local outgroups (i.e., the local measures).

**Manipulation.** We manipulated the attribution of threat in a (bogus) article explaining why the Greek situation negatively influences the European economy. In the *internal attribution condition*, the threats were ascribed to presumed stereotypical attributes of ‘the Greeks’, such as being lazy, unwilling to change, swindlers, and profiteers (Antoniades, 2012; Tzogopoulos, 2013). In this condition, we specifically expected carry-over effect via the TAP. In the *external attribution condition*, we provided a system explanation for the threats. Here Greece was accused of poor investments and borrowing decisions, having a bad infrastructure, using inefficient production processes, and having a large imbalance in their power and money distribution among its citizens. We expected carry-over effects via the TAP in the internal attribution condition but not in the external attribution condition.

**Measures about Greece and the economic crisis.** The main purpose of the first questionnaire was to measure perceived threat from Greece (i.e., the predictor, Figure 1, X) and attitudes toward Greece (i.e., the mediator according to the

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<sup>4</sup> Originally, we included a third experimental condition in which we did not specify the threat. However, because we could not tell *how* participants attributed the threat in this condition, we decided to drop this condition from the analyses to make the results section more comprehensible.

GAP, Figure 1, *M1*). Moreover, additional items were included (a) to strengthen the cover story that questionnaire 1 and 2 were separate studies, (b) to strengthen the manipulation by repeating the threat, and (c) for exploratory reasons. Those items concerned: consequences of the economic threat (measured before manipulation), stereotypes toward Greece (stereotype content model; Fiske et al., 2002), and responsibility of Greece for the economic crisis; but were excluded from the current paper to keep the method and results section comprehensible.

*Comprehension check.* To check whether participants had read the presented information, an open-ended question was administered after the manipulation. Participants were asked to mention what they believed was the most important message of the provided information. All answers were in line with the manipulation.

*Feelings toward Greece and its citizens (GAP-mediator).* For feelings toward Greece and its citizens, two feeling thermometers were included (0 *negative* or *cold* and 100 *positive* or *warm*). We differentiated between the nation Greece and its citizens as we considered reactions to the nation as more threat oriented. However, all four feeling thermometers were highly interrelated; accordingly, we combined the four items in a single scale,  $\alpha = .91$ ,  $M = 56.06$ ,  $SD = 16.57$ .

*Perceived realistic threats from Greece (main predictor variable).* Three items measured perceived realistic threats from Greece on a 7-point scale (1 *not at all* and 7 *completely*). That is, Greece has a negative influence on Europe's economy, Greece poses a threat to the European economy, and Greece poses a threat to the EU,  $\alpha = .74$ ,  $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ . This variable was used as the main predictor in our analyses.

***Intolerance toward local outgroups.*** The second questionnaire consisted of items about the local outgroups Turkish-, Moroccan-, and Polish-Dutch citizens. The purpose of this questionnaire was to measure feelings toward these local outgroups (i.e., response variable, Figure 3.1, *Y*), and to measure realistic threats from these local outgroups (i.e., the TAP-mediator, Figure 3.1, *M2*).

*Feelings toward local outgroups (main outcome variables).* Two feeling thermometers (1 *negative* or *cold* and 100 *positive* or *warm*) were included for Turkish-Dutch citizens,  $r$

= .90,  $M = 54.46$ ,  $SD = 19.60$ , Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $r = .94$ ,  $M = 47.16$ ,  $SD = 19.38$ , and Polish-Dutch citizens,  $r = .91$ ,  $M = 47.81$ ,  $SD = 20.42$ .

*Realistic threats from the local outgroups (TAP-mediator).* For each local outgroup, participants indicated on a 7-point scale (1 *not at all* and 7 *completely*) whether [local outgroup] had a negative influence on the Dutch economy and whether [local outgroup] was a burden to the Dutch economic system; Turkish-Dutch citizens,  $r = .80$ ,  $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ; Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $r = .89$ ,  $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ; Polish-Dutch citizens,  $r = .84$ ,  $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ . Originally, we included a third item “compared to Dutch citizens, how efficient do [local outgroup] work?” but in hindsight we were unsure about the face validity of this item (as it may also tap into symbolic threats). Accordingly, we did not use this item in our analyses.

*Symbolic similarities with Greece.* For each local outgroup, participants indicated on two items whether the group was symbolically similar to Greece. The items were: “To what extent is the [local outgroup’s] culture similar to the cultural norms and values of Greece?” and “How similar is the [local outgroup’s] way of living (e.g., behaviour, mentality, and work ethos) to the way of living in Greece?”; Turkish-Dutch citizens,  $r = .69$ ,  $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ; Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $r = .63$ ,  $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ; Polish-Dutch citizens,  $r = .76$ ,  $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ . The purpose of this variable was two-fold. Firstly, we included these items to explore whether symbolic similarities strengthen the assumed path between feelings toward Greece and feelings toward the local outgroups. Secondly, we ran our analyses with this variable as a covariate. However, in both cases, the effect of this variable was negligible and we therefore decided to not include this variable in our analyses presented below.

**Dimension reduction: Local outgroups.** Because our hypotheses did not differentiate between the local outgroups, we explored whether factor analysis would discriminate between them. A single factor analysis including the local feeling, realistic threat, and cultural similarity items identified five factors explaining 82.97% of the variance. The first factor consisted of all local feeling items,  $R^2 = .40$ ; factor loadings  $> .80$ . The second factor consisted of the realistic threat items for Turkish- and

Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $R^2 = .16$ ; factor loadings  $> .72$ . The third factor contained the cultural similarity items for Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $R^2 = .12$ ; factor loadings  $> .65$ . The fourth factor consisted of the two cultural similarity items for Polish-Dutch citizens,  $R^2 = .09$ ; factor loadings  $> .83$ . The last factor contained the remaining two realistic threat items for Polish-Dutch citizens,  $R^2 = .06$ ; factor loadings  $> .57$ . As this analysis did not discriminate between Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens on the feeling, threat, and similarity items, we decide to combine these two groups in the local group *Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens*: feelings:  $\alpha = .94$ ,  $M = 51.14$ ,  $SD = 18.86$ ; realistic threats:  $\alpha = .93$ ,  $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ; cultural similarities  $\alpha = .82$ ,  $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ .

## Results

**Analysis of means.** We checked whether the internal and external attribution conditions differed from each other on any of the measures. MANOVA did not indicate significant differences,  $F(6,63) = 0.14$ ,  $p = .990$ . This suggests that carry-over effects are equally present or absent in both conditions. Note, however, that we did not expect differences between means as in both conditions carry-over effects could occur. Instead, we expected that within the different experimental conditions different processes would underlie these carry-over effects. The remainder of our analyses will be on these processes.

**Testing the processes underlying carry-over effects.** We proposed two indirect pathways which could explain why threats from a distant outgroup carry over into local intolerance: the GAP and the TAP. For the GAP (Figure 3.1, top), the relationship between distant realistic threats ( $X$ ) and negative feelings toward local outgroups ( $Y$ ) is mediated by feelings toward the distant outgroup ( $M1$ ) — for the TAP (Figure 3.1, bottom), this relationship is mediated by realistic threats from local outgroups ( $M2$ ). In addition, we predicted attribution of the threat ( $WT$ ) to moderate the relationship between distant realistic threats ( $X$ ) and local realistic threats ( $M2$ ).

The relationships between each of the variables can be observed in Table 3.2. Because the mediators were correlated in the internal attribution condition (see Table 3.2), we choose to control for the other mediator's influence on feelings toward local outgroups.

**Table 3.2.**

*Correlation coefficients between our measures in Study 2. The correlations presented above the diagonal are for the internal attribution condition, whereas the correlations presented below the diagonal are for the external attribution condition.*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Threat Greece	—	-.17	.43**	.41*	-.45**	-.27
2. Feeling Greece	-.32 <sup>+</sup>	—	-.34*	-.31 <sup>+</sup>	.79***	.70***
3. Threat Polish-Dutch citizens	-.27	.11	—	.81***	-.51***	-.54***
4. Threat Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens	-.12	-.08	.44*	—	-.35*	-.55***
5. Feelings Polish-Dutch citizens	-.03	.48**	-.17	-.11	—	.82***
6. Feelings Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens	-.04	.48**	-.07	-.42**	.67***	—

*Note.* <sup>+</sup> $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Testing the GAP.** According to this pathway (Figure 3.1, top), distant realistic threats ( $X$ ) indirectly influence feelings toward local outgroups ( $Y$ ) via the mediator feelings toward Greece ( $M1$ ). We tested the GAP with bootstrapped mediation analyses using the SPSS PROCESS macro with 5000 bootstrapping samples (Hayes, 2013, model 4) and controlled for the effect of the TAP-mediator “local realistic threats” on feelings toward local outgroups. The results are presented in Table 3.3 and 3.4 (columns “Feelings toward Greece” and “Feelings toward Turkish- and

Moroccan-Dutch citizens/Polish-Dutch citizens”). Similar to Study 1, the relationship between feelings toward Greece and the local outgroups was significant, but the relationship between distant threat and feelings toward Greece was only marginally significant. This resulted in a marginally significant indirect effect for Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $q = -2.05$ , 95%CI [-4.75, 0.09], and Polish-Dutch citizens,  $q = -2.38$ , 95%CI [-5.71, 0.17], suggesting that distant realistic threats can indeed indirectly affect local intolerance via feelings toward the distant outgroup.

**Testing the TAP.** According to this pathway (Figure 1, bottom), distant realistic threats ( $X$ ) indirectly influence feelings toward local outgroups ( $Y$ ) via the mediator local realistic threats ( $M2$ ). Accordingly, we predicted that the distant and local outgroups are connected to each other based on a threat-based association (path  $d$ ). Importantly, we hypothesized that this threat-based association would specifically occur when the threat was attributed internally to characteristics of the distant outgroup’s members (experimentally manipulated moderator  $W1$ , dummy-coded: 0 = external attribution condition, 1 = internal attribution condition). We tested the TAP with the SPSS PROCESS macro with 5000 bootstrapping samples (Hayes, 2013, model 7) and controlled for the effect of the GAP-mediator “feelings toward Greece” on feelings toward local outgroups. We will describe these analyses step-by-step below.

Our prediction that the effect of distant threats ( $X$ ) on local threats ( $M2$ ) would be moderated by attribution ( $W$ ) was supported by the significant interaction effect (see Table 3.3 and 3.4, column “Local Threat”). Also in line with our predictions, local threats were strongly related to feelings toward the corresponding local outgroup (see Table 3.3 and 3.4, column “Feelings toward Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens/Polish-Dutch citizens”). Bootstrapped moderated mediation analyses further supported our conditional TAP-hypothesis for Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens and Polish-Dutch citizens. When distant threats were attributed to the distant outgroup members, the conditional indirect effect was significant for Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $q = -2.67$ , 95%CI [-5.97, -0.65],

and Polish-Dutch citizens,  $\rho = -2.02$ , 95%CI [-5.11, -0.34], indicating that distant threats indirectly caused local intolerance. When threats were attributed to the system, the indirect effect was positive but unreliable for Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens,  $\rho = 0.89$ , 95%CI [-0.89, 3.50], and Polish-Dutch citizens,  $\rho = 1.32$ , 95%CI [-0.02, 3.84].

**Table 3.3**

*Hierarchical analyses of our model. The first column represents the effects on mediator 1 feelings toward Greece, the second column the effects on mediator 2 local threat, and the last column effects on our outcome variable feelings toward Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens.*

	Feelings toward Greece (M1)			Local Threat (M2)			Feelings toward Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens (Y)		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Distant threat (X)	-3.32	1.89	.078	-0.15	0.25	.542	0.02	1.56	.990
Attribution (W)	—	—	—	-2.90	1.44	.048	—	—	—
Threat * Attribution	—	—	—	0.61	0.30	.044	—	—	—
Feelings Greece (M1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.62	0.10	.001
Local threat (M2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	-5.87	1.35	.001
	$R^2 = .04$ , $F(3,66) = 3.19$ , $p = .078$			$R^2 = .11$ , $F(3,66) = 2.73$ , $p = .051$			$R^2 = .53$ , $F(3,66) = 25.19$ , $p < .001$		

**Table 3.4**

*Hierarchical analyses of our model. The first column represents the effects on mediator 1 feelings toward Greece, the second column the effects on mediator 2 local threat, and the last column effects on our outcome variable feelings toward Polish-Dutch citizens.*

	Feelings toward Greece (M1)			Local Threat (M2)			Feelings toward Polish-Dutch citizens (Y)		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Distant threat (X)	-3.32	1.89	.078	-0.40	0.29	.179	-2.50	1.54	.110
Attribution (W)	—	—	—	-4.94	1.71	.005	—	—	—
Threat * Attribution	—	—	—	1.00	0.35	.006	—	—	—
Feelings Greece (M1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.72	0.10	.001
Local threat (M2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	-3.33	1.08	.003
	$R^2 = .04,$ $F(3,66) = 3.19,$ $p = .078$			$R^2 = .15,$ $F(3,66) = 4.00,$ $p = .011$			$R^2 = .57,$ $F(3,66) = 29.23,$ $p < .001$		

## Discussion

In line with our TAP-hypothesis, Study 3.2 supported a threat-based association when the distant threat was internally attributed to the threatening outgroup's members: Stronger perceived distant threat was related to stronger perceived local threat, and these local threats were negatively related to feelings toward local outgroups. In addition, though weaker, the data from Study 3.2 also supported our GAP-hypothesis and earlier findings from Study 3.1. Similar to Study 3.1, the relatively weak relationship between the distant threat and feelings toward distant outgroup members could be explained by an emotional detachment from the



outgroup members due to the outgroup's geographical distance. Conceivably, we would have found stronger support for the GAP if we had measured reactions directed at removing the threat (e.g., removing Greece from the EU) instead of negativity toward the distant outgroup members.

### General Discussion

The results of two empirical studies are in line with the idea that perceived distant realistic intergroup threats can carry over into local intolerance via two different indirect pathways. Thus, when a distant outgroup (e.g., Turkey or Greece) poses an economic threat, this intergroup situation may negatively affect distant observers' (e.g., Dutch university students) perception of local outgroups within their local environment (e.g., Turkish-Dutch citizens). Furthermore, the results support the analytical differentiation of our two hypothesized pathways. Firstly, in accordance with our *GAP-hypothesis*, distant realistic threats can influence local intolerance via a *group*-based association. That is, reactions toward perceived threats from a distant outgroup (e.g., Turkey) are generalized toward local outgroups which are associated with the distant outgroup (e.g., Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch citizens). Importantly, as illustrated in Study 3.1, this group-based association is based on characteristics of the distant and local outgroups and does not necessarily include a realistic threat. Secondly, distant realistic threats can also carry over via a *threat*-based association, supporting our *TAP-hypothesis*. When stereotypical characteristics of the distant outgroup members are perceived to cause the distant realistic threat (e.g., perceived laziness of Greeks), this distant threat alerts observers about realistic intergroup threats within observers' local environment (e.g., competition on the labour market by immigrants), and these local threats are associated with intolerance toward involved local outgroups.

These findings are important because they nuance earlier theorizing that realistic threats are unlikely to carry over due to being too concrete and situation-

specific (Bouman et al., 2014). Our findings suggest that these characteristics of distant realistic threats make them less likely to *directly* affect local intolerance; however, *indirect* carry-over effects of distant realistic threats on local intolerance seem more likely to occur. Thereby, our findings extend earlier literature on carry-over effects that focused on *symbolic* intergroup threats (Bouman et al., 2014), *local* realistic threats (e.g., Sassenberg et al., 2007), and general threats *unspecific* to a particular group (e.g., global debt crisis; Becker et al., 2011; Butz & Yogeeswaran, 2011).

Furthermore, the current findings broaden the scope in which the intergroup threat theory can be applied (Stephan & Renfro, 2002; Stephan et al., 2009). Our findings suggest that distant threats may elicit intolerance toward local outgroups that are uninvolved in the distant threatening situation. In addition, our results also provide important information about how observers react toward the outgroup perceived as threatening. In line with previous findings (Esses et al., 2001, 1998; Riek et al., 2006; Stephan et al., 2009), Study 3.2 confirms that realistic threats from a *local* outgroup relate to negative views of this outgroup's members. However, when a *distant* outgroup is perceived as realistically threatening, observers react by targeting the threat (e.g., not allowing Turkey to join the EU) rather than the distant outgroup's members. Possibly, the remoteness of the distant outgroup objectifies the situation more, makes observers less involved, and less inclined to react toward outgroup members that are unlikely to be encountered. Clearly however, further research is needed to test these suggestions.

Our findings also have potential applied value. Firstly, our results concur with the idea that global situations (e.g., a global economic downturn) might affect local intergroup relationships (see also Becker et al., 2011; Butz & Yogeeswaran, 2011). Whereas individuals and policymakers often focus on perceived negative actions of local outgroups (e.g., Polish-Dutch citizens 'stealing' local jobs) in order to explain and contest local intolerance, our results indicate that a much broader context should be taken into account. Therefore, in order to improve the image of a specific local outgroup, it may be advisable to not only focus on the portrayal of this particular

outgroup in for instance the media, but to also look at (seemingly unrelated) global situations occurring at the same time (e.g., the perceived role of Greece within the Eurozone crisis). Secondly, our results also point to the possibility that a threat-based association can be *obstructed* when the threat is attributed externally (e.g., bad loans). Accordingly, governmental reports on foreign issues might take advantage of these findings by focusing on external attributes, thereby preventing any reinforcement of local intolerance. Moreover, such external attributions might make observers more inclined to react to the context, rather than to the distant outgroup, which may also inhibit carry-over effects via the GAP (see also Bouman et al., 2014).

Our set of studies has at least three limitations. Firstly, because our mediators were measured rather than manipulated, we have to be cautious about claims of causality (i.e., internal validity). While testing causality is certainly a relevant endeavour for future research, the aim of the present paper was more modest, namely, to analytically and empirically identify two distinct pathways to carry-over effects of distant realistic threat. Because we successfully manipulated the salience of realistic threat in Study 3.1, we can conclude that perceived distant realistic threats caused local intolerance in that study. Nevertheless, there would certainly be added value in experimentally manipulating the mediator variables.

A second limitation is that we focused specifically on economic threats in our studies, whereas our findings may also apply to other intergroup threats. Although future research is needed to increase the external validity of our findings, we are relatively confident that other realistic threats (e.g., to the ingroup's well-being, power, or safety; Stephan et al., 2009) can similarly carry over. As with economic threats, these threats could be considered relatively concrete and group specific, making indirect carry-over effects most likely. Future research can test such a broader operationalization of distant realistic threats.

Thirdly, because our symbolic threat salience manipulation in Study 3.1 was unsuccessful, we were unable to test whether similar GAP and TAP processes underlie carry-over effects due to symbolic threat salience. Although characteristics of

symbolic threats suggest more direct carry-over effects (Bouman et al., 2014), future research is needed to see whether symbolic and realistic threats do indeed carry over in different ways. We think that the larger question is how both pathways toward carry-over effects relate to each other. For instance, are they separate processes or can they also interact? Further research, which is likely to be of an experimental or longitudinal nature, with larger sample sizes is needed to answer such interesting questions.

### **Conclusion**

Our findings suggest that there are at least two ways by which perceived distant realistic threats can carry over into local intolerance. The GAP relies on a group-based association and implies that reactions to distant outgroups are generalized to similar local outgroups. The TAP relies on a threat-based association and implies that distant threats alert observers about local threats, which can lead to intolerance toward local outgroups. In this sense, foreign realistic threats can indeed turn domestic, but in two different ways.

